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World War II

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COVER: On June 22, 1941 —following in the fatal footsteps of Napoleon in 1812— the Nazis invaded the USSR, thereby introducing their *Blitzkrieg*, or lightning war, concept to the new Eastern Front. The war, however, bogged down by the time the winter snows fell. In this picture, taken by German *Signal* Magazine photographer Arthur Grimm, German *panzer* (armored) tanks and cars pass through a Russian village while a Soviet Army truck burns at left. ABOVE: German infantry trail behind a tank grinding its way into a Russian village. One of the bitter paradoxes of the Nazi-Soviet conflict was that many Russian Cossacks fought *for* the Third Reich against the communists (Story, Page 16).

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Midway was the testing ground for an aerial maneuver designed to overcome the Zero's built-in superiority as a fighter.

Out of China in the spring of 1941 came the startling intelligence that the Japanese had a fighter plane that could outrace, outclimb and outturn any aircraft in somnolent America's military arsenal. For some who were not so somnolent, even before Pearl Harbor, this was grim news indeed. One such man was U.S. Navy aviator John ("Jimmy") Smith Thach.

Appraised of the Zero's performance capabilities, Jimmy Thach hastily repaired to his dining-room table with a box of ordinary kitchen matches.

A captured Zero (A6MZ) with U.S. markings flies over the San Diego area for testing in early 1943.

"I decided that we had better do something about this airplane," he later would explain, "and I drew on my days on the football field and the basketball court. I know there that if you come up against somebody who is faster than you are, you have to trap him somehow so that he can't use his superiority, whatever that may be."

For nights on end in the months before his country was drawn into World War II, Navy pilot Thach spread out his matches on the dining-room table to simulate aircraft formations. The next day, he and his fighter-squadron mates would try out his newly learned wrinkles.

He already thought the three-plane formation long favored in Europe and the United States was absolutely unwieldy. In tight turning maneuvers, one wingman was likely to "slide" into the other. Thach experimented instead with a combat unit of four aircraft, divided into two pairs flying a wide formation. And from that arrangement of kitchen matches came the U.S. Navy's "Thach Weave," whereby each split pair keeps an eye on the other's tail and turns in, towards the oncoming enemy's path, the moment he appears.

The idea was, "if any enemy came after one [pair], from above, ahead or astern, you might be able to confuse him by doing something he didn't expect." Further, the two aircraft "turning in" would have a quick shot at the on-coming Zeros. The turn at same time would alert the second pair that they were under attack.

Thach and his squadron mates tried it out. His Lt. Cmdr. Edward ("Butch") O'Hare was to take four Navy fighters flying at full speed and attack Thach's own formation of planes flying at only half-speed. "So he made all sorts of attacks, quite a few of them from overhead, coming down this way and that. It looked like a pretty good thing to me. Every time he came in to shoot—you can tell when an airplane is in position to shoot—we just kept weaving back and forth."

When the Navy flyers landed, O'Hare (for whom Chicago's O'Hare Airport is named) was obviously excited. "Skipper," he said, "it really worked. It really worked. I couldn't make any attack without seeing the nose of one of your half-throttle airplanes pointed at me."

Explained Thach further (in the book *The Pacific War Remembered*, Naval Institute Press, 1986): "You needed no communication. You were flying along watching the other two planes of your combat unit. They suddenly made a turn. You knew there was somebody on your tail and you had to turn in a hurry."

Then, a year later and six months after Pearl Harbor, came Midway (See story, Page 42). Thach and his pitiful handful of fighters from the *Yorktown* accompanied the carrier's 12 torpedo planes for their near-suicidal attack on Japanese Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's Carrier Strike Force. As the Americans bore in for the attack, swarms of Zeros met them.

Thach radioed the leader of his unit's other two-plane section to spread out and weave. But his section leader's radio was out. With no reaction from that source, Thach then ordered his own wingman, Ram Dibb: "Pretend you are a section leader and move out far enough to weave."

The Zeros by this time had swooped in. "The air was just like a beehive and I wasn't sure at that moment that anything would work." But then . . . "my weave began to work! I got a good shot at two Zeros and burned them."

Thach, later a full admiral, didn't expect to come back from the fight at Midway. But he did. So did his aerial maneuver, the Weave—soon to be passed on to U.S. fighter pilots worldwide. Fortunately for them and their country, Thach had been one of those individuals wide awake and prepared for war *before* the war.

Note to readers: *World War II* Magazine welcomes letters from readers sending in unusual insights, comment or informational items on World War II. If published, such letters will be subject to editing and condensation and must be accompanied by full name, address and telephone number. Address to Letters, 105 Loudoun St., S.W., Leesburg, Va. 22075.

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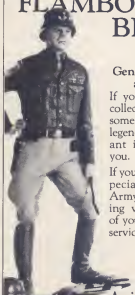

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FDR's liaison man Harry Hopkins shuttled among Allied capitals with never a stop.

By Wayne M. Dzwonchyk

If the great-power leaders of World War II were barbarians on the one hand (Hitler and Stalin) and, on the other hand, elected leaders who conducted themselves like Renaissance princes (Roosevelt and Churchill), then there was among them a faithful and selfless courtier who spent the last ebbing energy of his life serving both master and country. Often controversial in his own right, he was FDR's constantly-roving plenipotentiary, Harry Hopkins.

FDR's special envoy to London, Harry Hopkins (left), greets British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the latter's official government residence in London, 10 Downing Street, in the summer of 1941, soon after the Germans launched their gigantic invasion of the Soviet Union.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt completely dominated the determination of grand strategy for the United States in World War II. He kept all strands of national policy in his own hands. He treated his cabinet as individuals, rather than as a body. He himself coordinated foreign policy, military planning and war mobilization. He worked through senior aides, with no formal administrative arrangements to assist him in making policy decisions or executing them.

Complex, mercurial, and impenetrable, Roosevelt habitually played off competing subordinates, ignored formal lines of authority and refused to foreclose options. Thus military leaders often were hampered by the danger of misunderstanding and delay—sometimes they had difficulty even finding out about important decisions with implications for them. The increasing prestige of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (an organization with no formal legal basis until 1947) and the close, personal working relationships among key military and civilian subordinates made the jury-rigged system of policy formulation work. And in this process no one was more important than was Harry L. Hopkins.

A social worker with no military service, no background in foreign affairs, and no official title but "personal advisor to the President," Hopkins (who once described himself as a "glorified office boy") became Roosevelt's alter-ego in matters of grand strategy. The President freely dispatched him to Churchill or Stalin with the introduction, "I ask you to treat Mr. Hopkins with the identical confidence you would feel it you were talking directly to me."

Hopkins considered himself a doer, not a talker, with no personal agenda. He was the perfect foil and go-between for the protean Roosevelt and the romantic, imaginative and expansive Churchill. His ability to persuade everyone at a conference table to focus on fundamental issues earned from Churchill the sobriquet "Lord Root of the Matter." In Washington, his role as a liaison among the military departments, the State Department and the White House earned him more gratitude than resentment from agency heads baffled by Roosevelt's style of personal leadership. Secretary of the Army Henry L. Stimson wrote of Hopkins in March 1941: "The more I think of it, the more I think it a godsend that he should be at the White House." In advance of first meeting Hopkins, military leaders such as General Dwight D. Eisenhower expected to encounter a New Deal "visionary." Instead, they were often surprised by Hopkins' sure grasp of strategic issues. His biographer, Robert Sherwood, attributed his quick strategic insight to the teachings of Roosevelt, Stimson and General George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, and to Hopkins' own ability to learn.

Born and raised in Iowa, Hopkins moved to New York City prior to World War I. He directed a number of social welfare agencies in New York during the 1920s. In 1929, Hopkins ran a Red Cross-financed work relief program in the aftermath of the stock market crash. It became the model for the New York State Temporary Emergency Relief Administration, set up in 1931 by then-Governor Roosevelt, with Hopkins as Executive Director, to cope with problems of the deepening economic depression.

When Roosevelt went to Washington in 1933, he took Hopkins with him—as administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, a job Hopkins carried out with fervor and drive, as he established a new agency and spent money to create jobs. In 1934, Hopkins oversaw establishment of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which put millions of Americans to work on public projects. In this period, he also headed or served with the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation, the Rural Rehabilitation Division, the National Youth Administration, the Committee on Economic Security, the National Emergency Council, and the National Resources Planning Board.

By 1935 and 1936, Hopkins' attention had shifted toward presidential politics, and his role as a personal advisor to Roosevelt became steadily more important. Purged of all personal ambitions for high office by a near-

Continued on page 62

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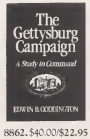

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Running gun battles in speeding trucks became standard fare for the British Long Range Desert Patrol.

By J. David Truby

Night was drawing its cloak over the vast desertland and mountains of North Africa as a group of six oddly-equipped vehicles stealthily approached the Italian airfield at Mersa Brega, a captured Lancia in the lead. The small column rounded a bend—unexpectedly, the road ahead was occupied by the tail end of an enemy truck convoy. "It was dark and late, so our boys just pulled on at the end of *their* column. They almost got on the airfield that way."

Despite the mollifying Lancia, however, an alert sentry soon recognized the British raiding party for what it was and opened fire. "We returned fire immediately. Suddenly, our trucks went into an impromptu attack with every gun blazing. The SAS lads tossed Mills bombs [grenades] about like confetti."

Forerunners of the later TV show The Rat Patrol, *the British SAS line up for a hard-hitting "jeep raid" on their desert enemy. Commanding this section is Lieutenant Edward McDonald, sitting at the wheel in the foreground.*

In minutes, the Italian truck convoy was reduced to a shambles, trucks ablaze, explosions rending the night air. The British vehicles did a screaming, 180-degree turn and roared back to the protection of the desert and its low hills. As dawn approached, the raiding team went to ground for the day; it would return to headquarters at Jalo in the protective darkness of the following night.

As later recalled by Maj. Gen. David Owen Lloyd, the hit-and-run desert fight late in 1941 resulted in no British casualties, in seven Italian trucks destroyed, two prisoners taken and 41 of the enemy force left dead or wounded.

Both the lop-sided battle score and the tactics employed were typical for Lloyd's own Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) and its follow-on compatriot for mobile desert warfare in North Africa, the Special Air Service (SAS). Far from any lingering stereotype of overly proper, tea-drinking Englishmen in stiff collars, the British had their share of rough, unruly, piratical-looking ruffians carrying the fight to the enemy during World War II—and one such contingent was the highly mobile raiding force assembled early in the war to do battle in besieged North Africa.

Later fictionalized in a series on American television, the real-life fighting was done largely by the LRDG and the SAS. And of those two outfits, it is the SAS that has garnered the publicity of recent years giving credit for the hit-and-run desert raids. This is unfortunate, because the SAS, the British version of the American Special Forces, is actually junior to LRDG in founding, and simply emulated the older unit's earlier missions. Indeed, LRDG helped SAS get organized, reach operational status—and then literally carried SAS teams into battle and back inthat sandy, desolate wasteland of North African desert during 1940, 1941 and 1942.

Recalling the role of the LRDG, Maj. Gen. I.S.O. Playfair, British military historian for the Middle East, wrote: "They sent small patrols of men in four or five trucks scurrying around enemy flanks out in the desert. At times, they operated as much as 300 miles behind enemy lines, doing their reconnaissance missions and other mischief.

"Their main role was to lurk near ports, along the coastal roads and main desert tracks. They gathered very valuable information for us. They got us accurate air and artillery strikes. They made hit-and-run attacks. They told us when and where to move our troops to counter enemy troop movements."

Concluded historian Playfair: "To say the LRDG was invaluable to our North African efforts would be a great understatement."

As he also acknowledged, there was a much nastier side to his heroes—some missions involved the death of enemy soldiers and leaders by less than the traditionally "honorable" means of combat.

LRDG veteran Dick Cutler once explained, "What we're talking about is generally regarded as murder, termination, and assassination with silenced weapons, poisons, domestic ambush, planted explosives, booby traps, pestilence and all that drill, you know." Cutler added: "Another trick was to find some friendly nomads—pound sterling notes made them real friendly—then pay them to poison Jerry's water point. We never poisoned wells, though; nobody did that out there."

Otherwise, said Cutler, terror was the mission. "Our duty was to kill and terrorize the Germans and the Italians. It was war and we did what we had to do to win, to survive."

Not all the LRDG operations were

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Saga of the concrete battleship in Manila Bay that would not quit until ordered.

By William R. Trotter

When Commodore George Dewey slipped through the outer defenses of Manila Bay on the night of April 31, 1898, one of the positions he sailed past was an insignificant shore battery on tiny El Fraile ("The Friar") Island. A contemporary photograph shows a puny-looking battery mounted on a tiny promontory at one end of a treeless clump of rocks that looks, in profile, rather like a nesting hen. A tour of duty there must have been dismal beyond belief.

By the end of the following day, of course, the garrison on El Fraile did not have to worry about boredom any longer. That island, along with Corregidor and the other defensive positions in Manila Bay, had become U.S. possessions, thanks to Dewey's stunningly one-sided victory over the forlorn squadron of Spanish Admiral Don Patriccio Montojo.

As, later, Japanese-American relations began to grow cloudy, U.S. strategic planning for America's far-flung Pacific bases began to be colored by the assumption that a militant, expansionist Japan was the most likely future adversary in that region.

Accordingly, plans were made to fortify the approaches to Manila Bay. Corregidor and its satellites—collectively known as the Fortified Islands—were to be an American "keep," an impregnable bastion which could hold out against a naval onslaught until the Pacific Fleet could arrive in force. No matter how successful the Japanese were on land—and no American strategist seriously doubted that the Japanese had the power to over-run the Philippines any time they chose—the mainland islands would be of little use to them as long as their shipping was denied access to Manila Bay, the main objective that made the islands worth conquering in the first place.

Using their landing craft as a "siege tower," troops of the 38th U.S. Infantry Division scurry "aboard" Japanese-held Fort Drum in Manila Bay late in the war. Earlier, while in American hands, the "concrete battleship" wrought havoc among Japan's forces assaulting Corregidor.

While conventional defenses—heavy coast-artillery rifles and colossal 12-inch mortars—were emplaced on Corregidor, Caballo and Carabao Islands, something radically different was done to tiny El Fraile. Beginning in 1909, and continuing until 1919, the island underwent a most unusual process of conversion. Its rock outcropping were sheared off at the waterline. Then, using the bedrock as their foundation, the Corps of Engineers erected a concrete battleship.

Fort Drum, as this curious position was christened, had a hulking, monitor-like appearance. It was 40-feet high and roughly shaped like a dreadnaught's hull, even down to a tapering "bow." Designed to withstand heavy bombardment, it boasted outer walls of steel-reinforced concrete between 25 and 36 feet thick, tapering to 20 feet at the level of the "deck." The deck itself was also 20 feet thick.

Drum's armament was formidable. On the foredeck, in two heavily-armored superimposed turrets, were mounted dual batteries of 14-inch rifles. Secondary armament—intended mainly to defend the minefields strung across the throat of Manila Bay—consisted of two pairs of 6-inch rifles, mounted port and starboard in armored casemates. Two 3-inch anti-aircraft guns and a few .50-caliber machine guns completed the fort's inventory of weapons.

A latticework mast, topped with searchlights and a lightly-armored observation post, together with a flimsy-looking barracks-cum-"superstructure," a derrick, and a cluster of storage tanks, all added to the "battleship" profile. Indeed, when the current was flowing into the bay, there was even a "bow wave." Green naval officers, much to their morning-after chagrin, sometimes radioed in from night patrols to report that they had spotted an "unidentified warship" steaming west at 3 to 4 knots.

When war actually came to the Philippines, the battle was lost almost before it began, as most of Douglas MacArthur's air power was devastated on the ground in the furious assaults of December 8, 1941. By January 1942, the American and Filipino ground forces had yielded most of Luzon, including Manila, and had withdrawn, according to plan, to the more easily-defended Bataan Peninsula—only to find there a pathetic fraction of the supplies and ammunition that should have been stockpiled to implement such a strategy. Corregidor and the Fortified Islands became the back-stop for the entire American defense, denying the Japanese any use of Manila Bay, "guarding the back-door" until—it was desperately be-

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lieved—succor would arrive from far across the Pacific.

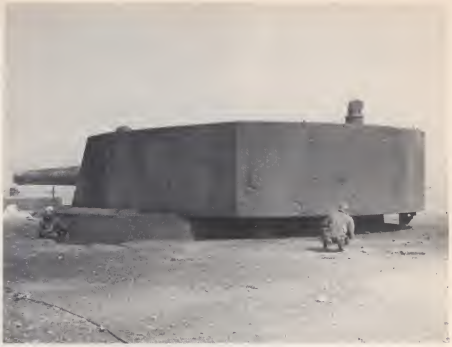
Fort Drum's gunners, members of the 59th Coast Artillery, provided a boost to everyone's morale on January 13th. On that date, a Japanese ship—from the look of her, a captured inter-island steamer—tried to approach Drum on its undefended side, from the "stern." Although the fort's upper turret, Battery Wilson, had a 360-degree traverse, it could not fire directly astern without blowing away the fort's own mast. The gunners of Battery E had noticed this Achilles' heel and had scrounged an old 3-inch harbor defense rifle to deal with it.

The Jap steamer cruised impudently on, carefully keeping Fort Drum's mast lined up with her own bow. Tension increased as the range was called down from the cage-mast. At 9,000 yards, Drum's over-anxious gunners cut loose. The three-incher had never been bore-sighted, so deflection was badly off for the first few shots. Shots number 7 and 8, however, bracketed the steamer, throwing up plumes of water close-aboard—the ship executed a hasty 180-degree turn and began to retire at maximum speed. Drum's ninth shot struck her on the lower deck, and as the steamer passed out of range, she was trailing smoke. The Japanese never again tried to approach Fort Drum.

The fort's own baptism of fire came on February 6th, when a Japanese artillery unit, named the Kondo Detachment after its commander, opened fire from the hilly terrain of Cavite Province, on the southern flank of the entrance to Manila Bay. Kondo first sprayed the Topside area on Corregidor, doing scant material damage but destroying forever the American gunners' cherished illusion that only heavy guns could reach The Rock from the Cavite side. In fact, Kondo's well-designed 105mm weapons could out-range any of Corregidor's obsolescent weapons, except its famous 12-inch behemoths.

Kondo then turned his attention to Fort Frank (Carabao Island) and Fort Drum. The 105mm shells caused some damage to Fort Frank, but were about as dangerous as spitballs to Drum's thick walls. The fort sustained more than 100 hits on that first day of shelling, yet suffered no casualties and no significant damage.

Such was the opening round of a classic artillery duel which would continue right up until the capitulation of Corregidor on May 6. There were lulls, of course, lulls during which the Japanese shifted weapons to and from the Bataan front. But in general, the weight of shellfire directed against the Manila Bay positions continued to grow, and following the collapse of resistance on Bataan on April 8, the full fury of the Japanese cannonade would fall solely on the islands. The Japanese were very good at this kind of warfare: they had pioneered modern techniques of siege-bombardment during the battle for Port Arthur in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05; their gunners were an elite caste, and their weapons were powerful.



While others insert a volatile mix of oil, gasoline and tetryl to dislodge the Japanese inside Fort Drum, American infantrymen guard the artillery emplacement's "topside" area against emerging defenders.

Two days after the first bombardment, Kondo added the weight of a pair of 150mm weapons—these wrought havoc in the open gunpits of Corregidor, but only succeeded in biting larger nibbles from the walls of Drum. In mid-March, in addition to more 150s, the Japanese began to use the most powerful weapons in their artillery establishment: huge, brutal-looking 240mm howitzers. Since the Japanese now enjoyed total air supremacy, their gunners were firing from precisely-plotted maps, updated daily by aerial reconnaissance photos, against mostly stationary targets. One by one, the fixed coast-defense guns on Corregidor were knocked out, as were all but one of The Rock's 12-inch mortars.

By default, Fort Drum's main battery became the spine and heart of the defense. Its 14-inch weapon had range enough to hit the Jap batteries, and they were powerful shells—each projectile weighed 1,560 pounds and required more than 400 pounds of powder to shoot. The trouble was that they were designed for plunging fire against heavily armored enemy ships, not against land targets. Their delayed-action fuses were designed to detonate the shells after they had struck the target and their kenetic energy had carried them through the armor and into the ship's vitals. By removing these fuses, ordnance technicians could modify the shells to explode on impact, rather than after they were buried deep in the ground. Thus altered, the shells had a greatly improved blast-effect, but the radius of the blast-effect was still too limited for them to be really efficient in a counter-battery role.

Moreover, while the Japanese could see exactly what they were shooting at, the defenders could not. All four fortified islands were dominated by higher ground ashore. The Pico de Loro hills in Cavite Province were more than 2,000 feet higher than the highest American positions, and from the slopes of Mt. Mariveles on Bataan (4,660 feet), the gunpits on Corregidor looked like so many bullseyes. The rough terrain on both sides of Manila Bay was deeply incised with valleys and ravines where the Japanese could deploy their howitzer batteries in defilade positions that were safe from everything save an incredibly lucky direct hit. The only way the defenders could spot their opponents was from their muzzle flashes, and the Japanese took care to bombard during the hours when the sun was behind their positions and blazing right into

the defenders' eyes.

Small parties of volunteers slipped ashore with radios, hoping to get close enough to the enemy guns to act as fire-control observers for the forts. The first time this was tried, several Japanese batteries were indeed silenced, at least temporarily. But the Japanese quickly figured out what was happening and greatly reinforced their patrols—subsequent landing parties found they were on suicide missions, and the American commanders ordered a halt to them.

Occasionally, big secondary explosions indicated that Drum's gunners had tagged an ammo dump, with presumably discomfiting consequences for the nearby Japanese gun crews. For the most part, however, the American gunners never knew whether they were hitting a target or not—the important thing was that they were *fighting back*. After the war, Japanese veterans of the campaign confirmed that Drum's counter-battery fire had caused casualties and considerable frustration. "El Fraile was a constant headache to us," stated the Chief of Staff of the Imperial Fourth Division.

The constant Japanese shelling eventually took its toll on Fort Drum. A hit on one of the main turrets opened a seam more than 70 square inches in size; the gunners welded a piece of iron over it, to keep out shell splinters, and kept fighting, knowing that a second hit in that spot would open their turret like a tin can. Another lucky hit penetrated one of the six-inch casemates, temporarily knocking out the gun and filling the entire fort with smoke and acrid fumes. One gunner was wounded when a Japanese fragment carromed down the barrel of a 14-incher, exited through the open breech and came to rest in his arm. Drum's superstructure was blasted to rubble and both antiaircraft cannon were smashed.

An awesome bombardment was opened on April 29, Hirohito's birthday—it signalled the final "softening up" before the amphibious attack on Corregidor that was being planned for early May. Each 240mm shell that struck the fortress left a crater 2 to 4 inches deep and about 2 feet in diameter; successive hits on the same spot gouged out much larger chunks of concrete—and by the end of April, shell-strikes against the walls overlapped in hundreds of places. Inside the fort, despite the fact that daytime temperatures hovered at 100 degrees, morale remained surprisingly high—at least the gunners had the satisfaction of being able to fire back. But the din

Continued on page 61

World War II

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Germany's Cossack Warriors

Caught between two implacable forces, Russian Cossacks who initially fought German tanks as saber-wielding cavalry switched sides and became masters of ambush and guerrilla warfare. They had chosen unwisely, however, and repatriation was the bitter price to be paid.

By John Galey

On a brisk spring day in May 1945, an ominous ceremony took place on a bridge in Judenburg, Austria. Seemingly, it was a festive occasion. On the far side of the bridge, loudspeakers blared Russian music, while red banners whipped in the breeze and photographers gathered to record a bitter piece of history. Soviet army officers and NKVD secret police stood by to receive a group of enemy Cossacks. On the other side of the bridge the Cossacks' commander, German General Helmuth von Pannwitz, unaware, approached in a white scout car, escorted by guards from the British 135th Infantry Brigade.

As he then proceeded to cross the bridge on foot, von Pannwitz suddenly saw the Soviets. Throwing his arms into the air, he exclaimed, "*Mein Gott!*" Then he drew himself up and, making the Soviets wait anxiously, marched slowly towards them. Finally he saluted his new captors. Following him came tall, elegant senior Cossack officers wearing jeweled daggers and swords. They, too, surrendered with barely concealed contempt for the Soviets. For the next few days, their example was followed by more than 17,000 Cossacks.

"What will happen to them?" asked a young British officer in the 135th Brigade.

"Officers will be shot," one of the Soviets predicted tersely. "But the ordinary soldiers will just be sent to Siberia."

The scene at Judenburg had the aura of a carefully directed theatrical performance, but few would remember the obscure drama played out three weeks after Germany's surrender. After all, it was only one incident against a backdrop of war-ravaged Europe, where millions of displaced persons and prisoners of war were shunted about to uncertain fates.

Apparently galloping off to the attack in 1943 are Russian Cossacks in the employ and service of the German armies that invaded the Communist Soviet Union in 1941.

For the Soviets, however, the Cossack repatriation at Judenburg offered a chance to reap sweet revenge against traitors who had fought on the German side. For their part, the Cossacks simply had chosen the losing side in their struggle against Stalin and communism. As for the United States and Great Britain, which forcibly repatriated the Cossacks to their homeland, the act was a case of outright appeasement to the Stalin regime—a denial of political asylum on a mass scale.

All told, more than two million Russians were forcibly repatriated for execution or long prison terms. But the 50,000 Cossacks eventually returned to the USSR suffered an especially poignant fate. For them, it ended a way of life dating back to the 14th century.

Cossack origins are lost in the cloudy past. The first Cossacks were probably renegade Mongol tribesmen of the Golden Horde which descended on Russia in the 13th Century. These renegades, called "Cossacks" by Greek and Italian traders along the Black Sea routes, soon intermarried with native Russian forest dwellers and switched allegiance to their adopted tribes. By the late 1400s, the Cossacks were being used as border guards and scouts by the Russian czars.

For the next 300 years, the Cossacks served as a warrior class, much like the Japanese *Samurai*. War was their principal occupation, and they were seldom unemployed.

OTHERS ALSO FOUGHT FOR THE GERMANS

At a grim-looking base in Dabendorf, Germany, Russian recruits to the Nazi cause march past their newly acquired commanders of the German Wehrmacht.

Before World War II, few would have imagined that treason and patriotism could become synonomous. Yet the German occupation of Europe compelled numerous types of collaboration characterized not only by base but also by idealistic motives.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, many Russians beyond the Cossacks seized the opportunity to rebel against their own totalitarian political system. In betraying their country by joining the German side, some saw themselves as patriots fighting for liberation from communism. Others had only mercenary aims. For many additional defectors, their choice had little to do with patriotism or treason; they simply wanted to survive.

In the great German encirclement battles of 1941, nearly four million Soviet soldiers were captured. The German POW camps were often merely barbed-wire corrals where prisoners died from exposure, typhus and starvation. The atrocious treatment stemmed from a policy of deliberate extermination, but by early 1942 the wholesale liquidation of POWs slowed down.

The prisoner-of-war issue at this stage revealed German conflicts and confusion over volunteer recruitment from POW ranks. Leading Nazis felt that Russians, like other Slavs, were expendable subhumans. Thus Adolf Hitler claimed, "We will never build up a Russian army; that is a phantom of the first order." SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler encouraged publication of a magazine entitled *Der Untermensch* (The Subhuman) which savagely caricatured Russian racial types. *Reichsmarshall* Hermann Göring added that the best solution for dissident Russians was to "shoot anybody who looked sideways."

By 1942, leading *Wehrmacht* officers on the Eastern Front began to favor a more practical policy. Through recruiting Russian volunteers, they sought to relieve a manpower shortage and a escalating partisan problem in rear areas.

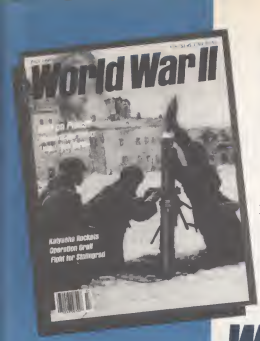
Among the volunteers were still-Soviet infiltrators who provided intelligence and sought to demoralize the Russian collaborators with ruthless methods. These tactics involved encouragement of drunkenness, looting and rape, as well as atrocities against captured partisans. Such actions would discredit the volunteers and the German cause in general.

Meanwhile, the *Wehrmacht* sponsored a more ambitious experiment which used military volunteers for administration and protection of occupied areas, in recognition of Russian aspirations for a political-economic base in the anti-communist struggle. The Lokot experiment's origins dated back to late 1941, when the 2nd Panzer Army under General Rudolf Schmidt halted in its advance on Moscow. The Lokot district south of the capital had anti-communist peasants resentful of Soviet collective farming. Lokot also had a provincial seat of 6,000 persons, along with well-developed agriculture, logging and tar works, and a vodka distillery. South of Lokot lay the Bryansk Forest which harbored a burgeoning partisan movement.

Lokot's mayor was a reform-minded, anti-communist engineer named Voskoboinkov who introduced new economic measures and representative government by elected community elders. He further recruited a local police force for protection against marauding partisan bands. On a limited scale, Lokot's mayor hoped to create a prototype for a free, post-communist Russia.

For General Schmidt, the Lokot project promised military advantages. He approved Voskoboinkov's executive authority, and in return the mayor agreed to keep the Bryansk partisans at bay, while he would also provision the 2nd Army. Schmidt thus freed his soldiers from occupation duties in this vulnerable area.

This small but flagrant threat to the Soviet government soon provoked reprisals. After fending off a Soviet airborne attack on Lokot in December 1941, Voskoboinkov was killed during a partisan raid in January of 1942.



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World War II

was a warlord and virtual dictator without any sincere political convictions. His sponsorship of a small local Nazi party was intended only to impress the Germans.

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Because the Cossacks' ancient traditions were so strong, they suffered a violent uprooting by the Soviet system. Cossack resistance erupted during the 1929-33 forced collectivization of farming, and the brutal liquidation of the *Kulak*, middle-class peasants. During this same period, the Soviets also executed more than 15,000 Cossack rebels. Cossack communities were further decimated by deliberately induced famines which eradicated supposed opponents of communism. As many as 50,000 Cossacks starved to death in the Kuban area alone. Suspected of political impurity, Cossacks were forbidden for a time to serve in the Soviet military.

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OTHERS ALSO FOUGHT FOR THE GERMANS

Before World War II, few
have imagined that treason
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ous. Yet the German occupati
Europe compelled numerous types of collaboration characterized not only by base but also by idealistic motives.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, many Russians beyond the Cossacks seized the opportunity to rebel against their own totalitarian political system. In betraying their country by joining the German side, some saw themselves as patriots fighting for liberation from communism. Others had only mercenary aims. For many additional defectors, their choice had little to do with patriotism or treason; they simply wanted to survive.

In the great German encirclement battles of 1941, nearly four million Soviet soldiers were captured. The German POW camps were often merely barbed-wire corrals where prisoners died from exposure, typhus and starvation. The atrocious treatment stemmed from a policy of deliberate extermination, but by early 1942 the wholesale liquidation of POWs slowed down.

The prisoner-of-war issue at this stage revealed German conflicts and confusion over volunteer recruitment from POW ranks. Leading Nazis felt that Russians, like other Slavs, were expendable subhumans. Thus Adolf Hitler claimed, "We will never build up a Russian army; that is a phantom of the first order." SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler encouraged publication of a magazine entitled *Der Untermensch* (The Subhuman) which savagely caricatured Russian racial types. *Reichsmarshall* Hermann Göring added that the best solution for dissident Russians was to "shoot anybody who looked sideways."

By 1942, leading *Wehrmacht* officers on the Eastern Front began to favor a more practical policy. Through recruiting Russian volunteers, they sought to relieve a manpower shortage and a escalating partisan problem in rear areas.

Among the volunteers were still-Soviet infiltrators who provided intelligence and sought to demoralize the Russian collaborators with ruthless methods. These tactics involved encouragement of drunkenness, looting and rape, as well as atrocities against captured partisans. Such actions would discredit the volunteers and the German cause in general.

Meanwhile, the *Wehrmacht* sponsored a more ambitious experiment which used military volunteers for administration and protection of occupied areas, in recognition of Russian aspirations for a political-economic base in the anti-communist struggle. The Lokot experiment's origins dated back to late 1941, when the 2nd Panzer Army under General Rudolf Schmidt halted in its advance on Moscow. The Lokot district south of the capital had anti-communist peasants resentful of Soviet collective farming. Lokot also had a provincial seat of 6,000 persons, along with well-developed agriculture, logging and tar works, and a vodka distillery. South of Lokot lay the Bryansk Forest which harbored a burgeoning partisan movement.

Lokot's mayor was a reform-minded, anti-communist engineer named Voskoboinkov who introduced new economic measures and representative government by elected community elders. He further recruited a local police force for protection against marauding partisan bands. On a limited scale, Lokot's mayor hoped to create a prototype for a free, post-communist Russia.

For General Schmidt, the Lokot project promised military advantages. He approved Voskoboinkov's executive authority, and in return the mayor agreed to keep the Bryansk partisans at bay, while he would also provision the 2nd Army. Schmidt thus freed his soldiers from occupation duties in this vulnerable area.

This small but flagrant threat to the Soviet government soon provoked reprisals. After fending off a Soviet airborne attack on Lokot in December 1941, Voskoboinkov was killed during a partisan raid in January of 1942.

At a grim-looking base in Dabendorf, Germany, Russian recruits to the Nazi cause march past their newly acquired commanders of the German Wehrmacht.

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Swedes, Poles, Persians, Turks, Prussians, French—at one time or another, all tasted Cossack steel. In return, Cossack chieftains and their followers were rewarded with land, trading rights, arms, and supplies by Muscovite czars anxious to retain their loyalty and good will.

By the 18th century, the term "Cossack" signified in Russia a caste of free peasants with certain military obligations to the central government. Their self-governing settlements had a highly developed community spirit with their own laws and traditions. In return for free farm lands, Russian czars from Ivan the Terrible to Nicholas II exacted much-needed military service. The Cossacks functioned as elite, if sometimes uncontrollable, shock troops for Russia's frequent, unsettling revolts and intrigues. Sometimes, feeling misused, they revolted themselves.

The Cossacks viewed war as a family affair. Fathers instructed their sons in horsemanship, rifle marksmanship, and how to wield a lethal saber. A Cossack youth achieved proficiency with a saber when he could leap on horseback over a stream and cleave the water with his sword without stirring up any spray. By the time he was 12, he was often swinging his sword at a human foe.

Cossacks frequently served as praetorian guards for the czars; in 1917 Czar Nicholas II had a personal Cossack guard of 2,575 officers and 60,000 men. Superb horsemen, they could mount and dismount while a horse was at full trot. Clinging to the side of the galloping beast, they presented a minimal target to the enemy. An American observer in World War I described Cossack field exercises as "such gymnastics as I have never seen in any circus."

As a warlike caste that exalted physical and military prowess, the Cossacks were considered mercenaries. In fact, although officers received extensive lands and other privileges, enlisted soldiers were poorly paid, yet had to equip themselves with expensive arms and uniforms. To supplement their incomes they became expert looters.

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Replacing him was one of Lokot's most controversial personalities, Bronislav Vladislavovich Kaminski. Talented, ambitious and unscrupulous, he would build Lokot into a flourishing, private military feifdom.

Kaminski quickly installed himself as provincial chieftan of the Autonomous Administrative District of Lokot. Unlike his predecessor, he was a warlord and virtual dictator without any sincere political convictions. His sponsorship of a small local Nazi party was intended only to impress the Germans.

Surprisingly, though, he displayed some talent in military organization. The newly-created Russian National Liberation Army (RONA) had a brigade of 10,000 soldiers with 15 battalions including an artillery section; an armored-car unit; 24 captured T-34 tanks, plus a prized, new 40-ton Klim Voroshilov (KM) heavy tank; a flak battery for protecting his headquarters against air attack, and large quantities of Soviet small arms. His soldiers wore a bizarre hodgepodge of Red Army uniforms with *Wehrmacht* accoutrements and Czarist Russian insignia and decorations.

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RONA proved surprisingly effective in combating partisans. But morale eroded gradually as its soldiers learned of atrocious German occupation policies elsewhere. Morale diminished, too, when the tide turned on the Eastern Front. By the spring of 1943, Kaminski was ruthlessly coping with mutiny and he also narrowly avoided assassination during a partisan "terror" attack coordinated with a Red Army frontal assault at Bryansk.

As the *Wehrmacht* reeled backwards from the Soviet counter-offensive of mid-1943, Field Marshall Guenther Hans von Kluge informed Hitler that "the famous Kaminski" could effect a widespread scorched earth retreat. RONA did live off the land but never achieved von Kluge's expectations. Hard pressed by the Red Army, the Kaminski Brigade, now totaling about 6,000 men, began a gypsy caravan trek south from Lokot, accompanied by 25,000 camp followers—including of course the theater and ballet troupes.

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TOP: Artist Olaf Jordan's portrait of Generalmajor *Helmuth von Pannwitz, who as commander of the First Cossack Cavalry Division was honored by his Cossack followers with the title of Field Ataman, never before bestowed upon anyone outside the Cossack community. MIDDLE: Nazi lookalikes, these Cossack volunteers and their mounts thunder across the Russian Steppes in pursuit of their foe, the Red Army, in 1942, while the tide of conquest for the Third Reich was at its highest. Later, as the Germans lost the war, these men were allowed for the first time to transfer to Heinrich Himmler's "pure Aryan" Waffen (Armed) SS formations. BOTTOM: A "Germanized" Cossack goes to the aid of a fallen comrade on the Eastern Front in 1943.*

assistance for their rebellions such as they had received during the civil war. When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, this long-awaited aid seemed once more to materialize.

Many Cossack communities initially welcomed the *Wehrmacht* soldiers as liberators. But the Cossacks actually knew little about the social and political policies of their supposed new allies in the war against communism. Nor did Germany itself have a coherent plan for exploiting anti-communist resentment among the diverse, far-flung peoples of the Soviet Union. Leading Nazis still reviled Russians and other Slavs as *Untermenschen* (subhumans). Regarding recruitment of military volunteers, Adolf Hitler affirmed in 1941, "Only the German may carry arms, not the Slav, not the Czechs, not the Cossacks." In the face of such attitudes, many Cossacks stayed loyal to Russia.

After the German disaster at Stalingrad in the winter of 1942-43, a more practical view prevailed among certain ranking *Wehrmacht* officers who wanted to alleviate a severe manpower shortage. These pragmatists welcomed the formation of Russian volunteer legions including Cossacks, a concept originally developed by pro-Russian German officers known informally as *Ostpolitikers* (east-politicians). Raised in regions bordering Russia, most of them spoke the language fluently and sympathized with the people. Since 1941, the dissident *Ostpolitikers* had sought formation of Russian volunteer legions on a mass scale for another Russian civil war that would destroy communism once and for all.

Most Cossacks and their *atamans* (chieftains) regarded serving on the German side as a necessary means of regaining Cossack independence. Few realized they were serving German aims, least of all National Socialism. Other Cossacks eagerly volunteered as the sole alternative to almost certain death in prison camps where tens of thousands of Russian prisoners died from exposure, starvation, and typhus. Still other Cossacks donned German uniforms in the hope of material or political rewards.

One of the first instances of Cossack "line-crossing" came in August 1941, when Major Ivan N. Kononov surrendered his entire regiment of riflemen to the *Wehrmacht*. Kononov was a graduate of the prestigious Soviet Frunze Military Academy and a veteran of the Soviet-Finnish "Winter War" of 1939. With its accomplished commander, the regiment was incorporated to fight on the German side in late 1941. Its avowed purpose was to eradicate "the most evil enemy of mankind—communism" from Russian soil.

Early Cossack units formed under German auspices were organized in a more haphazard way. Typical was an incident in the summer of 1942, when the German XL Panzer Corps captured so many Russian POWs that it could not provide adequate military escort to distant prison camps. The corps headquarters thus selected a number of pro-German Don and Kuban Cossacks from among the POWs. They were given horses and instructions to escort their countrymen back to the camps. The Germans hardly expected to see these Cossacks again, but in September they dutifully reappeared and asked for another assignment.

German recognition of the Cossacks' actual combat potential was influenced by earlier extensive Soviet use of Cossack cavalry. In the Soviet military buildup of the late 1930s, Cossacks had been readmitted to military service; about 100,000 served in the Red Army in 1941. Cossack General Lev Dovator's spectacular cavalry charges with drawn sabers against Panzer formations provided one of the few examples of aggressive Soviet warfare during the catastrophic retreats of 1941. Such cavalry attacks, matching cold steel against Nazi tanks, were hardly practical—

An injured Cossack is aided by two colleagues. The man being carried has a German Army eagle on his fur cap, while the one at right sports a Waffen (Armed) SS *Death's Head emblem.*

Dovator himself was killed that year. So, by 1942, the cavalry changed tactics to small-scale, surprise raids and ambushes which harassed *Wehrmacht* rear areas.

The Germans eventually realized that their own Cossack units would be useful in raids against Soviet partisans. Unlike armor, horses could enter the deep forests and swamps where guerrilla bands took refuge. Moreover, in the howling Russian winters, *Wehrmacht* vehicles regularly broke down, while hardy Siberian ponies used by the Cossacks, easily withstood the punishing weather.

Cavalry General Ernst Koestring, a Russian-born former German military attaché in Moscow, approved formation of the first Cossack anti-partisan units. These were equipped with German arms and had German liaison teams. Recruiting of POWs was supervised by another *Ostpolitiker*, Colonel Count Freytag von Loringhoven, chief of Eastern Counter-Intelligence for the *Wehrmachts*.

The *Ostpolitikers* and *Wehrmacht* pragmatists recognized Cossack aspirations for independence from communist rule. Under the auspices of *Wehrmacht* Quartermaster General Eduard Wagner, the Kuban Cossacks established a self-governing settlement in their traditional homeland in October 1942. This community served as a pro-Nazi recruiting base and also provisioned the *Wehrmacht* with much-needed farm produce.

After the German defeat at Stalingrad, the Kuban Cossacks withdrew westward to Novogrudok in Byelorussia. Here, Cossacks from various parts of the Soviet Union found a new haven and a pathetically short-lived resurgence of their lifestyle. Here, too, they kept Soviet parti-

sans at bay with a paramilitary self-defense force.

German reverses in Russia prompted another grudging innovation. Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi theorist of the Nordic master race, decided that Cossacks were not really subhuman Slavs, after all, but descendents of the Germanic "Dinaric" race. In addition to this ethnic hocus-pocus, the warlike prowess and anti-Semitic reputation of the Cossacks also attracted favorable Nazi attention.

In the spring of 1943, Field Marshal Ewald von Kleist ordered all Cossacks to Kherson in the Ukraine, where 12,000 soldiers and new recruits quickly assembled. Pressured by Soviet advances, the Cossacks soon moved to Mlawa, Poland, for a crash three-month training program and unification into a division. In the trek out of Russia, they were accompanied by thousands of family dependents and camp followers who justly feared terrible Soviet retributions. Some bade farewell to Russia with rape, looting, and murder.

A German officer, Maj. Gen. Helmuth von Pannwitz, was posted to command the division. Born in Upper Silesia near the Russian border, von Pannwitz long had known and respected the Cossacks; he had even learned to speak fluent Russian. An avid horseman, he had served as a cavalry lieutenant in World War I and afterwards joined the German Free Corps. His new Cossack soldiers grew to adore this sympathetic, conscientious field commander.

German officers held most senior commands, though the Germans made a brief effort to train young Cossacks for future leadership at the Officers' Training and Cavalry School at Bromberg. One of the few exceptions to German command was the veteran Cossack leader Kononov, promoted to general of a Don Cossack unit.

Cossack emigrés in Europe hastened to join the division or propagandize its cause. Many were aging veterans of the Russian Civil War like General Peter N. Krasnov, *ataman* of the Don Cossacks, whose attempt to capture Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalingrad) antedated the ill-fated German effort by 25 years. Another legendary emigré was General Andrey Shkuro, who received a kind of roving commission with the Cossacks in 1943. In the civil war, his Kuban "Wolves" had been notorious for taking no Bolshevik prisoners. This most daring and reckless cavalry commander of the White side had a bawdy campfire humor and a charismatic, easy-going comraderie which fascinated other Russian Cossacks.

When such famous personalities visited Mlawa, the old Imperial Russian tricolor flew above the camp and the divisional band played "God Protect the Czar." But many younger Cossack soldiers could only identify with such nostalgia through legends. The generation gap was significant. The leading emigrés had not lived in Russia for decades, and thus were out of touch with life in the Soviet Union. Their yearnings for a return to pre-revolutionary Russia were entirely unrealistic. Plans for a "Greater Cossackia" never materialized.

Von Pannwitz sought to eliminate incompetent former White Russian officers who had little identification with the current struggle. He also tried to weed out German personnel who had no empathy for the Cossack way of life. Typical of his idealistic provisions was the order that German cadres learn to speak Russian—in fact, they had difficulty with the language, although the "inferior" Cossacks learned German with relative ease.

Another concession was the retention of Cossack traditional dress. They wore *Wehrmacht* tunics and breeches but also, depending on their Cossack origins, they wore various types of fur caps, as well as capes with sewn-on cartridge loops, and red, yellow, or blue stripes down their trouser sides. The Cossacks also carried elaborately decorated daggers (*kindjal*) and swords (*shashqa*) which were often family heirlooms. Because the Cossacks came from so many diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, the Germans never attempted standardization of uniforms and accoutrements.

The trouser stripes sometimes annoyed German generals who thought the Cossacks were burlesquing the generals' own distinctive red-striped breeches. German Colonel Constantin Wagner, who commanded a Don Cossack regiment, was once called to account by an outraged *Wehrmacht* general who demanded to know what he was doing in that "comic opera getup." In a discussion about uniforms at Hitler's headquarters, General Wilhelm Burgdorf remarked with amusement, "Von Pannwitz looks quite savage with his crooked sword dangling in the scabbard down in front."

Another significant recognition of Cossack tradition came when von Pannwitz assigned Russian Orthodox chaplains to each regiment. Every Cossack soldier received an aluminum cross to wear around his neck. Against aetheistic communist doctrine, the Cossacks had fervently retained their religious beliefs. The equally aetheistic Nazis had forbidden Germans to attend Cossack religious services, but von Pannwitz encouraged German attendance.

Following another long-held tradition, the Cossacks also held raucous singing and dance fests with much vodka drinking. Ritual sword fights and indiscriminant shooting into the air usually would follow. German personnel frowned on this waste of ammunition but tolerated it as part of the price for Cossack assistance.

In the training at Mlawa, von Pannwitz found that the Cossacks far surpassed the Germans in taking advantage of terrain and the art of camouflage. They dug in instinctively and were excellent trackers. Sandtable exercises intrigued the Cossacks, who recommended new innovations in deception, infiltration and ambushes. Also, Cossack engineer units excelled at improvised bridge-building.

By 1944, the 1st Division and a newly raised 2nd Division comprised the XV Cossack Corps, which received a third division in early 1945. The Corps eventually totaled about 70,000 men, including support detachments and von Pannwitz' personal guard, some of whom had once served in the escort of Czar Nicholas II.

Unlike the formidable fighting forces of the XV Corps, a more loosely knit Cossack formation totaling about 35,000 men and dependents was used by the Germans as a defensive force in northern Italy. Under *ataman* General Timpohey Domanov, this unit temporarily found a haven in the small Alpine town of Tolmezzo, where the Cossacks fought Italian partisans in the summer and fall of 1944. Just before the town fell to British troops late in the year, the Cossacks made a harrowing retreat north through the Alps. A blizzard obscured their path and they were repeatedly harassed by partisans.

In their long whiskers and knee-high boots, riding horses or roughly made wagons, the Cossacks looked to one British soldier "like a tableau from the Russia of 1812." As thousands of cavalrymen rode single-file in a seemingly endless stream towards eventual British internment in Austria, a British lieutenant astutely remarked to his soldiers, "You're witnessing a scene the world will likely never see again."

In 1944, a few scantily armed Cossack units were also sent to France, where they fought half-heartedly during the Allied invasion at Normandy. Their lackluster performance resulted from a decline in morale, as the Cossacks withdrew ever-further from what they saw as their primary mission: fighting Stalin and communism. The Cossacks had no quarrel with the Western Allies.

Germany's doomed Cossacks throw down their weapons under British Army supervision in conquered Austria in May 1945 as the war ends in Axis defeat. The future was grim and often fatal for these famous horse soldiers.

In September of this same year, the XV Corps was sent into Yugoslavia to replace *Wehrmacht* soldiers sorely needed on other crumbling fronts. The corps took on the operational mission of guarding the vital Zagreb-Belgrade railway, often sabotaged by resistance leader Josep Tito's partisans. Here, at least, the Cossacks were again fighting the hated communists.

The corps thus plunged into a murky civil war complicated by savage ethnic and religious conflicts. Under the 1941 partition of Yugoslavia, Serbia fell to German command. Supported by the Allies, Tito's Serbian guerrillas fought the Nazis and other Axis troops. Serbia had an Orthodox majority; among them were the much-feared royalist resistance forces of Cetniks under General Draja Mihailovic. While trying to avoid clashes with the *Wehrmacht*, Mihailovic fought Tito's partisans and hoped for eventual victory by the Allies.

Under German sponsorship, the neighboring independent state of Croatia was established, with a Roman Catholic majority and a minority of Orthodox Serbians. Here, the pro-German Ustase militia carried on a genocidal campaign against Serbians. As nominal allies, the Cossacks and Ustase came to hate each other because of religious differences. In fact, the Cossacks felt much closer to the oppressed Serbian minority in Croatia. Eventually, the VX Corps concluded informal, non-aggression pacts with the Cetniks, and occasionally the two forces joined in fighting Tito's partisans.

The Cossacks were eminently suited to a war of movement without front lines. Avoiding frontal assaults, they struck at the enemy's flank and rear. They were experts at quickly detecting ambushes, and during their own raids they stealthily communicated with each other by making animal noises. In addition, the Cossacks foiled partisan deceptions much more readily than German soldiers, easily detecting such typical partisan tricks as leaving fake footprints leading into minefields. As one *Wehrmacht* officer readily admitted, "No German would have ever perceived this."

On Christmas Day 1944, the XV Corps fought its sole battle against a regular Soviet Army unit, engaging in ferocious hand-to-hand combat with the Soviet 133rd Infantry Division on the Yugoslavian River Drava. Fighting for a doomed cause, the Cossacks charged with their *atamans* against the Soviets just as they had done 25 years before on the steppes of south Russia at the close of the civil war.

The corps repulsed the 133rd Division, which suffered heavy losses and desertions to the Cossack side. If this line-crossing had happened earlier in the war on Russian soil, the desertions might have made more significance for the Cossacks' aspirations. But now the corps was involved in a hopelessly deteriorating situation. By 1945, Tito had amassed more than 180,000 communist guerrillas, against 100,000 German soldiers, several unreliable Bulgarian divisions, and the Cossack Corps. Since 1941, the Axis troops had carried out six major anti-partisan offensives in

TOP: A mounted Cossack in German service approaches a Wehrmacht *column, 1943. The Germans called their Cossack allies* Kozaks. *ABOVE: While the Cossacks rallying to the German side often stuck to their age-old mode of transport, the motorized equipment made available to these subsidiary forces doesn't appear exactly first-line* Blitzkrieg *machinery, to judge from the truck alongside the battle-equipped Cossack pictured here.*

Yugoslavia, without notable success.

After the news of Hitler's death on April 30, 1945, some Cossack officers considered uniting the corps with the German-sponsored Russian Liberation Army of General Andrei Vlasov. Together, they could make a last-ditch stand against Soviet communism. Or perhaps, when the war ended, the XV Corps could join the Western Allies for World War III against the Soviet Union.

When neither plan seemed likely, von Pannwitz reluctantly decided to withdraw into Austria and surrender to the British. On May 9 and 10, the XV Corps paraded with perfect discipline into captivity.

Von Pannwitz and his soldiers knew nothing about Allied agreements at the Moscow "Tolstoy" Conference of 1944 or the secret provision made at Yalta in 1945, in which Great Britain and the United States agreed to repatriate all Soviet citizens in Europe and elsewhere, regardless of their military status or political allegiance. This they justified by the fear that a refusal of Stalin's request would cause the Soviets to delay the return of British and U.S. POWs in German camps liberated by the Red Army.

In moral terms, a more pertinent argument was that some Cossacks had committed war crimes and thus deserved a cruel fate. But the majority of Cossacks did not fall into this category, nor did tens of thousands of their family dependents. Yet forced repatriation condemned all of them, even emigrés with non-Soviet citizenship.

As a German POW, von Pannwitz could have claimed separate treatment according to the Geneva Convention, and thus have avoided the Cossacks' fate. But as an honorable commander, he refused to abandon his men in adverse times. In turn, his soldiers elected him "Field *Ataman* of the Cossacks"—a signal honor never before conferred on an outsider.

Cossacks held in British internment camps initially were treated humanely, a respite that unintentionally lulled them into a false sense of security. When the terrible news leaked out about impending repatriation, some committed suicide. Others managed to escape. Roundups of the remaining majority provoked wild, desperate mêlées in which British guards clubbed and bayonetted whole Cossack families and unarmed POWs as they shoved them into cattle cars for one-way train trips to the East. Some British soldiers later recalled their dismay and disgust at having to participate in these ugly scenes.

According to notorious Soviet directives issued during World War II, any Russian captured by the enemy was automatically a traitor and thus deserved execution. The chief offenders were ranking officers. In January of 1947, the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* announced that Krasnov, Shkuro, von Pannwitz, Domanov, and other Cossack generals had been condemned for "forming 'White Guard' detachments and for carrying out espionage, diversionary and terrorist activity against the Soviet Union."

All died on the gallows at Moscow's Leftortovo Prison.

One of Germany's many catastrophic mistakes in invading the Soviet Union was its failure to effectively exploit anti-communist, pro-nationalist sentiment such as the Cossacks'. National Socialism's myopic racial prejudices against Slavs prevented the Third Reich from ever fully harnessing occupied Russia's military potential.

From 5½ million Soviet prisoners of war and deserters, about 800,000 volunteered to serve in German uniform. Germany could have utilized millions more of eager accomplices had it not been for incoherent Nazi policies and resistance. Nor did most *Wehrmacht* commanders foresee the need for volunteer legions; they initially counted on a 12-week war.

If Germany had more fully utilized native military volunteers along with an enlightened political-economic policy in occupied areas, the Reich might have split occupied Russia into nationalistic, self-protected regions. Certainly, this was the Cossacks' fervent hope. Germany could thus have provoked another Russian civil war—a spectre Stalin may have feared more than enemy invasion itself.

Not that Germany, merely by doing this, could have won its eastern conflict. But it could have prolonged its stay in Russia and extended the war's duration until a negotiated peace was possible.

In purely military aims, German experiments with Russian volunteer legions typified the abortive and half-hearted efforts to exploit anti-communism. From the German viewpoint, it was too little, too late. From the perspective of Russian volunteers like the Cossacks, they eventually saw that they had merely traded one form of tyranny for another.

Warriors and adventurers, rebels and killers, and above all, irrepressible romantics, the Cossacks now disappeared into oblivion. Whether one saw them as patriots, as traitors, or simply as magnificent barbarians, it was indisputably the end of an era. □

John Galey is a free-lance writer with a doctorate in history and a keen interest in military history. Recommended readings include Operation Keelhaul: The Story of Forced Repatriation from 1941 to the Present, *by Julius Epstein;* The Secret Betrayal, 1944-1947, *by Nikolai Tolstoy;* The Cossacks *by Philip Longworth.*

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Surprise Action Delayed

For the approaching British raiding party, the target was not the submarine pens but rather St. Nazaire's giant drydock. Its destruction was the job entrusted to the aging destroyer plunging into the harbor basin at greater and greater speed.

By Fred Bost

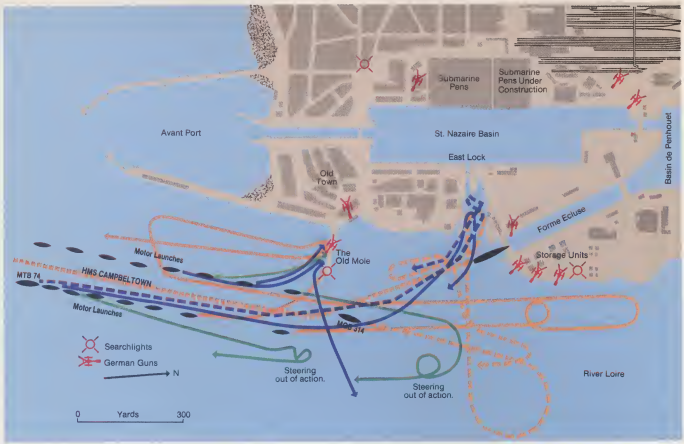
With the arrival of early spring in Europe, the British war planners of 1942 knew, various weather conditions would combine to allow a stealthy approach to the southwest coast of German-occupied France. Easterly winds could be expected in the lower approaches to the English Channel. A commando force relying upon small motor boats for transportation could travel under the protective lee of the homeland left behind.

Then, too, bright sunny days could be expected to warm up the continental land mass ahead of the commando and naval force. With the land "heated up" beyond the temperatures of the sea, a haze would blanket the French shoreline. Like low-lying cloud, it would extend 40 to 50 miles from shore, while closer to landfall it would take the form of fog in dense patches. With luck, an approaching small fleet would be well-hidden and undetected until last possible moment.

It was during this period—on March 27, 1942—that Admiral Karl Dönitz, commander of the German U-boat fleet, was motoring down the coast from his headquarters at Lorient to the German naval base at St. Nazaire. Six miles upriver from the mouth of the Loire, the French seaport was pivotal to Dönitz' interests for its concrete submarine pens, for its role as home base for many of his U-boats. With nine bomb-proof pens already built as a safe haven for the submariners, another five were just then under construction—in all, from the Admiral's point of view, a tempting albeit difficult target for the British.

His very purpose in making the 70-mile drive was to

In this oil painting by Norman Wilkinson, "The Campbeltown at St. Nazaire," the Royal Navy destroyer is seen heading for its target, the gigantic dry dock at St. Nazaire on the Loire. Later, the jubilant Germans thought the ship's ramming mission a success—but they were in for a rude surprise.



With the submarine pens of St. Nazaire visible on the far side of the port's basin (top center), the trail of the Campbeltown, *the Motor Gun Boat behind, the string of motor launches and the Motor Torpedo Boat at rear leads to one objective—the first lock of the giant drydock known as the* Forme Ecluse. *In the map, the old American destroyer's rupture of the gate has been effected. The next morning, still wedged into her ramming position, "Old Buck" completed her mission by blowing up.*

conduct a one-day inspection of German defenses at St. Nazaire, especially around his precious submarine pens. Their thick escarpment protected them from air raids, but he had fears of more direct assault. While inspecting the facilities of the 7th Submarine Flotilla, he asked the unit's commander, Lieutenant Herbert Sohler, what action would be taken if the British should ever attack. As Sohler showed the Admiral the standing defensive orders, he suggested that a direct assault upon St. Nazaire would be highly unlikely. Dönitz told him not to be so sure of that. Later in the day he drove back to Lorient to the north.

Even as they had spoken, however, a small, heavily-armed British force was slicing through the early-spring mists off the Loire estuary, with the naval base at St. Nazaire as its target. And while the submarine pens definitely were listed as one objective, the real goal for the combined British force was the huge, 1,100-foot drydock at St. Nazaire known as the *Forme Ecluse.* The French port's drydock was the only one on the Atlantic seaboard large enough to service German battleships of the *Bismarck* and *Tirpitz* class.

Bismarck already was gone, sunk nearly a year before, but the *Tirpitz* remained, a wolfine threat to Allied shipping and naval forces in the North Atlantic. She was quartered, safely for the moment, in the fjords of Norway, but if she should sortie out and suffer battle damage, the great *Forme Ecluse* was available to her for repairs and refitting. From Prime Minister Winston Churchill down to the lowliest rating at sea, the British wanted that option removed . . . anything to discourage German use of the dangerous battleship. "If the dock, one of the largest in the world, could be destroyed, a sortie of the *Tirpitz* from Trondheim [in Norway] into the Atlantic would become more dangerous and might not be deemed worth making," wrote Churchill after the war.

The job was one for Combined Operations, foster-parent to the British Commandos and the brains behind Britain's early-war raids on German facilities in Norway, France and North Africa. A newcomer to Britain's armed services, Combined Operations planned and coordinated largely amphibious assaults involving two or more of the more traditional armed forces—sea, air and land. In the case of St. Nazaire, it would be a Royal Navy and Commando "show," with the Royal Air Force providing a diversionary bomber raid. A former explorer of the Antarctic, Commander R.E.D. Ryder, would command the squadron of fast, light vessels chosen for the lightning thrust up the Loire, while Lt. Col. A.C. Newman of the Essex Regiment would lead No. 2 Commando ashore from the small boats—and from an aging destroyer that was considered key to the raid's success.

Their target was one to challenge even a peacetime wrecking crew. Capable of accepting giant ships up to 85,000 tons, the drydock was a full 1,148 feet long and 164 feet wide. It relied upon massive, moveable lock gates at each end to control its internal water level. These gates alone (actually, sliding walls called caissons) were 35 feet thick, 167 feet long and 54 feet high. Each hollow gate was made up of numerous watertight steel compartments which could be flooded to match outside water pressure. Even the powerful motors which moved these sliding walls were amply protected, housed on the west bank of the Loire. Furthermore, when the lock was open, the walls were recessed into the protection of the river bank. And

although a pumphouse was located near the southern caisson, the pumps that emptied and filled the lock were almost invulnerable, hidden 40 feet below ground.

St. Nazaire itself was some 250 miles from the nearest British port, six miles up the Loire from France's southwest coast. The approach of a fighting fleet—even if one could be mustered—would be detected beforehand. And because the Germans had submarine pens at St. Nazaire, the basin was one of the most heavily defended places in Hitler's Europe.

Nevertheless, the British government decided the situation called for desperate measures—the drydock had to be put out of action for at least a year. A seaborne raid would be gambled.

Captain J. Hughes-Hallett, the chief naval planner at Britain's Combined Operations Command, devised the idea of using a single ship as both a battering ram and delayed-action superbomb. Nothing less rugged than a destroyer could be counted upon for such a heavy job, but the British were reluctant to deliberately sacrifice one of their fighting ships.

That's where the only American "participation" in the enterprise entered the picture. Fifty outmoded U.S. destroyers had been loaned to Great Britain in 1940 in return for use of bases in Newfoundland, Bermuda and the Caribbean. Among them was the USS *Buchanan*, named after Admiral Franklin Buchanan, the first superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. Built by the Bath Iron Works in Maine, the *Buchanan* was launched in January 1919, too late to participate in the war for which she was designed. Ruggedly constructed, she was then a sleek and swift marvel of her period. A full 314 feet from stem to sternpost (but only 31 feet abeam), she could cut the water at 35 knots.

But fighting ships age quickly, overtaken by new advances. When *Buchanan* was loaned to the British after an undistinguished U.S. career, she was in the twilight of her usefulness. Her boilers, for instance, could take no more than 250 pounds of steam pressure at 400 degrees fahrenheit. New destroyers could safely build 650 pounds of steam at 850 degrees.

Although she was renamed *HMS Campbeltown* in 1939, the British continued the American habit of affectionately calling her "Old Buck." She worked valiantly in the wartorn seas. On September 15, 1941, she rescued survivors of the Norwegian tanker *Vinga*, which had been sunk by German aircraft. However, it soon became apparent after brushes with German aircraft and submarines that Old Buck was too outdated, too undergunned, for any really critical tasks.

Ironically, it was her age that won for her a significant role in history. Her loss in a raid upon St. Nazaire would hurt less than the loss of a more modern ship. On the other hand, the task of the key vessel in the raid required sturdiness. A close inspection of Old Buck's superbly built structure proved she still filled that bill.

With Old Buck chosen as the sacrificial ramming vessel, planning for the St. Nazaire raid went into high gear. The venture was given the code name Operation CHARIOT. The planners thought they had found two ways to reduce the risk of detection during the final hours of approach: first, the raiding force would avoid the normal river channel; second, the ship would be disguised as German.

In order to stay clear of the busy Charpentiers Channel that had been dredged through the Loire's estuary, the raiders would have to cut across the wide but very shallow mouth of the river. This, they knew, would require slow speed and hours of friendly darkness. Accordingly, the raid had to take account of the fact that the nights grow

Formerly the USS Buchanan, "Old Buck" as she was called, was renamed Campbeltown *by the Royal Navy. In this photo, her funnels are seen cut off, a disguise to make her seem a German torpedo boat of the* Möwe *class.*

shorter as winter wanes. Equally important as that factor and the offshore mists, a spring tide would be needed to assure passage across the shifting mud-flats of the river mouth. The Liverpool Tidal Institute informed the planners that the raid would have to be made sometime during the nights of March 27 to April 1 if the tides were to prove adequate.

In the other matter, the decision to disguise Old Buck as a German vessel was sparked by a German code book captured during a commando raid at Vaagso, Norway, two months before. The Germans had every reason to believe the book had been safely destroyed. But it wasn't and it contained challenges and countersigns for German torpedo boats of the *Möwe* class. The British made superstructure changes designed to disquise Old Buck as one of those enemy craft. Then, if it became necessary, the German call signs could be used to fool anyone challenging the revamped destroyer or her accompanying vessels.

Since the complete destruction of one of the moveable locks was deemed critical to keeping the drydock inoperative for at least a year, Old Buck was to attempt to destroy the southern caisson. In the event the ramming run failed, an accompanying motor torpedo boat (MTB) would try to do the job with a torpedo. Commando demolitionists to be put ashore would place "assist charges" in the caisson to finish the task. Other demolitionists, each carrying 90 pounds of explosives, were assigned to destroy pumps, winch motors, valves and gears. Finally, the 80 demolitionists, protected by 180 commando fighters, would attack the submarine pens before withdrawing.

A tiny assault fleet would carry the raiders to the fight, then bring back survivors. It consisted of Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) 74, Motor Gun Boat (MGB) 314, and 16 motor launches. MTB 74 was fitted with torpedo tubes mounted forward and bridged upward on the forecastle, so that her "tin fish" could be lobbed *over* a torpedo net. The 1,800-pound torpedoes were fitted with delay fuses, to detonate after the attackers had withdrawn. The other large boat, MGB 314, would help provide firepower. She carried two Vickers pom-poms forward, capable of firing 120 rounds per minute; a Rolls semi-automatic two-pounder aft and twin-mounted .50-caliber machine guns on pedestals at each rail amidships.

About 15 commandos would ride each of the 16 motor

launches into the fray. The launches were of mahogany construction, 112 feet long, 19½ feet abeam, each armed with two Oerlikon 20mm guns.

Unfortunately, none of the attack craft—with the exception of Old Buck—had sufficient range for the mission. The concept of towing all 18 short-range craft behind escort ships was considered impracticable. The planners decided only the two larger boats, MGB 314 and MTB 74, would be towed; the MTB behind Old Buck, the MGB behind one of two modern destroyers which would escort and protect the small fleet from English shores to its approach at the river mouth. The accompanying launches were modified with additional fuel tanks so they could make the trip unaided.

The raiding force, leaving Falmouth, England, under the escort of *HMS Tyndale* and *HMS Atherstone*, would follow a roundabout course, staying at least 80 miles off Brest to avoid enemy hydrophone reconnaissance. The British submarine *Sturgeon* was to station itself at the lead-in point of the estuary. On the night of March 27, it would surface and guide the fleet to the river using signal lights. With the escort destroyers standing by at the river's mouth, MGB 314 would lead the attackers upriver. At the proper moment, she would "peel off," exposing the drydock's southern caisson to Old Buck and MTB 74, both following behind.

Plans also called for a preliminary bombing raid by British Lancasters to divert the enemy's attention to the skies. If all went well, the tiny fleet could be in the outer basin at St. Nazaire before being discovered.

To give Old Buck the appearance of a German torpedo boat, she was berthed for modifications at Devonport, England. Her four vertical stacks were replaced with two modern stacks, raked back. Glass windows were smeared with paint to prevent glinting. As protection for the helmsman, thick armor plating was fitted around the bridge. An armored "fence" was welded along the weatherdeck railing amidships, to shield crouching commandos during the "ram run."

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Nigel Tibbetts, a naval explosives expert, fitted the charges that turned the ship into a floating time bomb. Twenty-four British Mark VII depth charges were linked together with cordtex (a flexible high-explosive cord relatively insensitive to shock). With the cordtex wrapped around the depth charges (4½ tons of explosives in all), simultaneous detonation was assured. To trigger the superbomb, a delay chemical-pencil fuse was fitted. This kind of fuse had to be activated many hours in advance of detonation. Acid, slowly eating its way through a copper wall, would eventually ignite the primer, blowing the bomb.

Realizing the result would be catastrophic if the package were to explode prematurely, Tibbetts took extraordinary precautions to protect it. The bomb was rigged below decks behind the steel pillar which suported the forward gun turret. A steel protecting tank was built around the bomb; then the tank itself was encased in concrete.

But the additions presented a weight problem. Old Buck was drawing a 14-foot draft. She now lay too deep in the water to make it across the mud flats of the Loire estuary. Accordingly, her gun turrets, torpedo tubes, depth-charge throwers and related ammunition were removed. To leave her a modicum of protective fire, she was fitted with a 12-pounder and two 76mm mortars at the bow, and eight 20mm Oerlikon guns at the thwarts. By reducing passengers and crew to 75, her re-designers finally attained the critical 11-foot draft.

With all preparations completed, Lt. Cmdr. Samuel H. Beattie took charge of the ship. It would be his responsibility to guide Old Buck over the mud banks and later to slam her into the drydock's caisson.

A German flak unit opens up on a British commando team holed up in one of the buildings at St. Nazaire. The fighting on shore lasted for some hours after the British naval units left. Five men escaped captivity or death.

Admiral Dönitz was back at his own Lorient headquarters when the tiny British fleet turned toward the Loire that night to rendezvous with the submarine *Sturgeon*. The two escorting destroyers remained at station in deep water to await the evacuation effort as the assault craft disappeared in the direction of the estuary's tide-covered mud flats.

Twice Old Buck shuddered to a stop as she hung up on sandbars, but both times she managed to fight herself free. At 11 p.m., Tibbetts activated the time bomb fuse. Because acid fuses aren't very predictable, detonation was expected between 6 and 10 hours later.

As the ships moved upriver under thick clouds, the surrounding land remained invisible, revealed only by the strong smell of grassy marshland. But the cloud cover that effectively masked the raiders from prying eyes ashore also worked against them. It was affecting the air raid, audible in the distance. The Royal Air Force had started bombing at 10 o'clock, but, due to secrecy precautions, the airmen knew nothing of the amphibious raid they were supporting. Their orders made little sense to them: they had been instructed to use a single bomb on each separate run; to remain above 6,000 feet, and to release no bomb until the specified target was clearly defined.

With the cloud layer making the latter requirements impossible, most of the airmen found themselves circling helplessly above the target while antiaircraft fire grew more and more intense. On the ground, German commanders finally grew suspicious of the odd sky gyrations.

The German order went out: full alert in the defense area.

Now fully activated, the defense cordon was formidable. The 280th Naval Artillery Battalion manned 28 70mm, 15mm and 170mm guns straddling the river, supplemented by an antiaircraft brigade with 43 20mm and 40mm guns. In addition, the boat basin held four harbor-defense boats, 10 minesweepers and nine submarines.

The vigilant Germans spotted the small British assault fleet while it was still two miles short of its target. A searchlight sprang to life on the north shore of the river, its beam capturing the port side of Old Buck and lighting up the bogus German ensign at her trunk. The Britishers, vying for time, quickly flashed the recognition signal of the German torpedo boat they were supposed to represent. The ruse worked. The signal was acknowledged and the searchlight went out.

Then German guns on the south bank began firing at the fleet. Cooly, Beattie signaled the guns: "Friendly forces being fired upon." The firing stopped.

But when watchers on the shore saw the small fleet increase speed at the approach to the boat basin, they realized something was radically wrong. This time firing began in earnest. Tracers whipped the air. The signal bell on Old Buck rang out: "Open fire!" As the bogus German ensign fluttered down into the ship's wake, a British union jack snapped the breeze.

With the searchlights from shore searing the eyes of the Britishers, heavy German fire took its toll. On Old Buck, both the coxswain and the quartermaster at the wheel were slain by a shellburst. Another heavy shell from the north shore blew away the 12-pounder on the forward deck, hurtling overboard its crew, together with the crew of a nearby mortar.

"I saw *Campbeltown* urging bravely on. . ." wrote an onlooker from one of the motor launches later. "I could see *Campbeltown's* bridge being rather heavily plastered. The fire was all tracers and coming from port. Some of it looked like very fast-moving rockets and when the shells ricochetted they looked like sudden stars."

Meanwhile, MGB 314, leading the British pack, rubbed gun wales with an anchored German patrol boat. British pompoms won the brief duel with the enemy boat's 80mm gun.

Behind the gunboat, Old Buck revved up impatiently, her stem close to ramming the stern of her wooden companion. As the MGB finally veered hard to starboard, Old Buck reached her ramming speed of 20 knots. The dry-dock's caisson loomed before them. Commandos and crew braced themselves as Beattie, now at the wheel, shouted: "Stand by to ram!"

The motor launches, meanwhile, had increased speed and opened fire. The dock area was a cauldron of noise and bursting color. The motor gunboat, with Naval Force Commander Ryder aboard, had burst past the port's old mole at 18 knots. Just ahead was the key lock to the dry-dock. Just behind was Old Buck.

"We saw the entrance to the lock, put our helm to starboard and let *Campbeltown* go ahead," recalled an officer from the gunboat. "She was coming fast and shooting hard. She made a straight dive for the lock gates and

TOP: After the commandos! German troops rush into combat to thwart the British raid on St. Nazaire. MIDDLE: Aftermath: captured British commandos under Wehrmacht *guard following the raid. BOTTOM: An aerial view of the German's much-prized drydock (top center) at St. Nazaire, which was large enough to hold a ship the size of the German battleship* Tirpitz, *sister to the sunken* Bismarck.

she had to help her a flood of towards one-and-a-half knots. There was a hell of a crash."

Also watching, of course, was Ryder. "She was lost to us in the glow of the searchlights as we circled round to starboard," he later recalled. "The next we saw of her was at the moment of her striking the lock gates. There was a grinding crash and the flash of some minor explosion on her foc's'le as she came to rest. We were unable to see the soldiers scrambling ashore, but we could see she remained fast in the gate with all her guns firing hard up the lock."

Everyone aboard had felt tremors when the enemy anti-torpedo boom snapped, its wires scraping along the hull of the racing ship. Old Buck had surged on. An incendiary shell landed on her forward deck—like a huge, Fourth-of-July sparkler.

The plowing ship had hit her target dead center. Metal screeched and sparks flew as her bow crumbled. But the old lady, built so sturdily by American hands, proved her strength. Her keel remained rigid. The wall surrendered as Old Buck climbed the bulwark. Men and loose items went flying at the abrupt stop. Though her plates were crumpled from stem to bridge, Old Buck's mangled deck extended a foot beyond the inner surface of the ruptured, 35-foot caisson. It was 1:34 a.m., just four minutes beyond the 1 o'clock "ram time" originally planned back in England.

About 75 percent of the men on Old Buck's weather deck had become casualties during the mad run at the dry-dock. The ship was afire in several places. Damage-control parties were attempting to control the flames so other survivors could disembark. Yet German bullets and shells continued to rake the deck. The disciplined commandos, their web belts bleached white so they could recognize one another ashore, coolly worked their way down scaling ladders through smoke, fumes, and enemy fire.

Elsewhere, five of the wooden motor launches, with no armor protecting their volatile gasoline tanks, soon exploded with roars. Tracers and searchlights cut the smoke seeking new targets as the remaining launches took evasive tactics. Burning gasoline reflected from the surface of the water. Men screamed in agony. The smell of death was everywhere: cordite burning, gasoline burning, and flesh burning.

Nevertheless, the raiders persevered. By plan, too, four scuttling charges were detonated in Old Buck's stern, in effort to make it impossible for the enemy to float her free. MTB 74—now no longer needed to help destroy the caisson—fired her torpedoes at the entrance of the nearby submarine pens. Likewise, the sieving charges to have been used below water level against the drydock caisson were also employed elsewhere. The commandos ashore turned pumps and engines to twisted junk with their explosives.

Colonel Newman's commandos had gone ashore from the still-surviving motor launches, the *Campbeltown* and the motor gunboat. Sharp firefights had erupted as they engaged German defenders or made their hit-and-run attacks. "The battle at this moment was beginning to go in our favour," reported Commander Ryder later. "The weight of supporting fire had evidently been felt, and the Commandos in the area of the *Tirpitz* dock had undoubtedly overcome the resistance in that area. There was an appreciable slackening in the enemy's fire."

With survivors from the *Campbeltown* being guided to relative safety aboard the gunboat, Ryder took advantage of the lull to have a look at the wrecked destroyer. Dodging occasional bursts of fire, he studied Old Buck from behind a small hut for about five minutes. She was quiet, no sign of life. "The ship had ridden over the torpedo net and was firmly held by the bows. However, she started to

Mission Accomplished—"Old Buck" rammed the gates of the drydock at St. Nazaire at 1:34 on the morning of the daring surprise assault by the British. Although the Germans thought the mission a failure, the destroyer's later explosion changed their minds.

settle by the stern [due to the scuttling charges], so I decided that everything was going to plan there."

Nearby, the commandos were at their work. "As I stood watching the *Campbeltown* there was a minor explosion in the big pumping house of the dock nearby. There was a flash inside and the glass flew out of the windows. A moment later, as I was returning to my ship, there was another explosion even nearer, in the hut containing the mechanism for withdrawing the outer lock gate."

Towards the far end of the big drydock there was still another explosion, "which I took to be the mechanism for working the other gate." Nearby, a shed set on fire "was now blazing furiously and casting a lurid light on the surrounding buildings and on the black waters of the Loire."

But it was time to leave the Nazaire hornet's nest. Regrouping German forces were engaged in fierce battle with the commandos on shore, while on the water most of the motor launches had been sunk or turned into brightly-flaming torches. The motor gunboat, last British vessel left near the big drydock, signalled the commando parties to return immediately, but Colonel Newman's men were too busy to respond. Ryder and his junior officers decided there was nothing further they could do to help the men ashore, while they might yet save their own wounded aboard the gunboat.

"The escape of the MGB from St. Nazaire harbour was, to quote from the citation accompanying the award of the Victoria Cross to Commander Ryder, 'almost a miracle,'" says an official British history on Combined Operations. "She was repeatedly hit all down the starboard side, but providentially her engines continued to work . . . Six Oerlikon shells passed through a petrol tank, but it was full and did not explode. They rushed down the river at 24 knots with searchlight beams full upon them. For 25 minutes they faced this terrific onslaught . . ."

In the end, only three of the 16 motor launches assigned to the raid made it back to England, in addition to the gunboat. Lost also was the motor torpedo boat, which had caught fire while attempting to rescue the men of a burning motor launch. None of the commandos who took part in the fighting ashore returned with the raiders—"all but five of the landing party were killed or captured," wrote Churchill later.

The hours following the short, violent battle found the Germans at St. Nazaire elated. They had killed or captured 31 Royal Navy officers and 151 seamen, as well as 34 commando officers and 178 enlisted commandos. They saw themselves as victors, and the damage to the vital *Forme Ecluse* was considered repairable. The raid had been "repulsed" at staggering cost to the British.

With the coming of dawn, the wrecked ship wedged in the lock gate became a conversational curiosity to the jubilant defenders. An estimated 380 Germans milled around the site, taking pictures and gathering combat souvenirs. High-ranking officers and technicians closely inspected the wrecked destroyer and the damaged lock.

That's when Old Buck played a trump card. The 10:30 a.m. detonation from her bowels shook the entire port and broke windows miles away. Defeat became victory for the British.

The delayed-action explosion disintegrated the entire forward section of the grand old lady. The ruptured drydock gate was thrown from its rollers, fatally weakening its resistance to the river's pressure. A surge of water pushed it inward and rammed it against the left edge of the dock. Old Buck also surged inward with the flood. She sank, bowless, halfway up the dock bed, her job completed.

Lieutenant Commander Beattie, captured at St. Nazaire, received the Victoria Cross for his actions. The citation read in part: ". . . in recognition not only of his own valour but also of that of the unnamed officers and men of a very gallant ship's company."

Five Victoria Crosses were bestowed among the 611 warriors who took part in the daring raid on St. Nazaire, in which only one of every three raiders survived. The task had been accomplished so thoroughly that the drydock could not be reopened until the early 1950s, well after the end of hostilities. And the *Tirpitz*, finally sunk by bombing, never did leave her Norwegian sanctuary. □

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British Bluff At Singapore

From planning start to fighting finish, the British defensive policy for Singapore failed to consider realities. The rampaging Japanese, on the other hand, were outnumbered and at the end of their logistical string as they gathered to storm the great British base in the Far East.

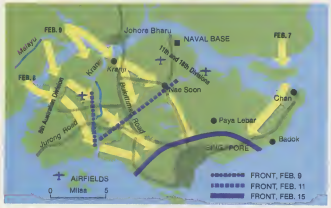
By Raymond Callahan

"The guns pointed the wrong way—it was as simple as that." That confident assertion, in a graduate school seminar 25 years ago, was my introduction to the incredible sequence of events that led up to the fall of Singapore on February 15, 1942—an event Winston Churchill described as the worst disaster in British history. Was it really that easily explained? I decided to find out. The story, still unfolding as new facts come to light, turned out to be anything but simple—and full of so many odd twists that no fanciful novelist would dare employ them all.

Take those famous guns. The Singapore base was planned just after World War I ended. Only the U.S. Navy could challenge the Royal Navy at sea—and the British government already had taken a policy decision *not* to embark on an arms race with America. But Japan might someday pose a threat to British interests in Asia. The answer was obvious (at least to the Admiralty): the redeployment of British seapower east of Suez.

After 1919, however, Britain could not afford a two-ocean navy, and no British government was going to send most of the fleet permanently to the other side of the globe. The solution was a one-ocean navy with bases available in two. The huge Singapore base, designed to accommodate a major fleet, would be ready and waiting, fully

The British sent two of their mightiest warships to Singapore in late 1941 to exert a "vague menace" in place of a Far Eastern fleet or a well-defended naval base. The Japanese did not feel overly menaced, and attacked Malaya and Singapore anyway. Both the battlecruiser Repulse *and the battleship* Prince of Wales *were sunk by Japanese aircraft (shown here in the painting by John Hamilton) within 48 hours from the time the Japanese struck at Malaya in December 1941.*



TOP: As indicated by the map, the Japanese advance down the Mayalan Peninsula to the great prize at the bottom late in 1941 and early in 1942 was carried out surely and relentlessly. MIDDLE: With the Japanese advancing upon the Singapore bastion by land, the big guns pointed to sea were no comfort to the British defenders. Just as bad, the causeway across the Strait of Jahore was inadequately blown—the advancing Japanese troops still were able to use it as a bridge from the mainland they had just conquered. BOTTOM: Prior to the siege, British General Archibald Wavell (left) inspects the big coastal guns that, unfortunately for Singapore's defenders, faced only to sea.

stocked, when the main fleet arrived from European waters to meet a Japanese thrust. Before the fleet arrived, it was always possible that the Japanese would mount an attack on Singapore—or at least a raid that would wreck the base. Hence the defenses were oriented against a seaborne attack, defenses whose backbone were the great batteries of coast-defense guns. The guns *could* fire inland, but that was not the way the Japanese were expected to come.

Here we come to one of the most striking characteristics of the Singapore story—the expectation that things would work out as the planners hoped. If Britain had one fleet to protect a two-hemisphere empire, what would happen if the Japanese waited until that fleet was tied down by war (or the threat of it) in Europe before moving? That question was asked—but never answered, presumably because an honest answer—disaster—was also an unacceptable one.

Then there was the supposed "impregnability" of Singapore's landward defenses, provided conveniently not by the taxpayer but by nature—"the jungle." The British Army commander in Malaya in the mid-1920s pointed out that the Japanese could easily attack Singapore by landing on the narrow neck of land—the Kra Isthmus—that joins Malaya and Thailand and by then marching down the west coast of Malaya. Clearance for cultivation had left little jungle there, and the British themselves had installed an excellent road and rail system running straight to Singapore. Moreover, once on the north side of the narrow strait that separates Singapore Island from the Malayan mainland, the Japanese would be within field-gun range of the naval base—and sitting on Singapore's water supply, which depended on reservoirs on the mainland.

These interesting facts were never put to the Committee of Imperial Defence, the British Empire's highest defense-policy forum. Like the awkward question about the *timing* of a possible Japanese move, they might have exposed some nasty cracks in the foundations of a very expensive and much-publicized imperial defense policy.

Ten years later the rebirth of aggressive German nationalism made "main fleet to Singapore" a highly unlikely strategy. Another army commander in Malaya reiterated Singapore's vulnerability to attack *overland* from the north. By then, however, a new factor had entered the equation. The admirals might be absent; the generals might worry about inadequate land defenses. But the air marshals were confident that *they* could solve the conundrum of how Singapore was to be held.

It is impossible to understand what finally happened at Singapore without grasping how very bitter interservice relations were in Britain between the wars. Brand new in an era of scarce resources, the RAF felt itself in a constant struggle to maintain its independence. Its senior officers tended, as a result, to make very large claims for their service, claims hotly resented and vigorously rebutted by the Army and Navy. Singapore had been such a bone of contention from the beginning. The Navy planned to use Singapore as a pivot for fleet operations, while the Army saw to its defense against seaborne attack (the only kind "officially" recognized). The RAF claimed it could defend Singapore more efficiently than ships or guns. And Hitler gave the RAF its chance to do so. By the late Thirties, it was apparent that the Royal Navy, facing both Germany and Italy, would be unable to spare anything significant for Singapore prior to an actual Japanese attack. It had also become obvious that Singapore's defense perimeter had to include mainland Malaya, because the Japanese had to be kept from seizing airfield sites within range of the naval base. The British Army simply did not have enough troops available to garrison all of Malaya, a country about the size of England itself. The RAF, however, had proceeded to

The Japanese Imperial Navy was deterred by big British guns that only pointed out to sea, but not the hardy Japanese infantrymen who attacked the "impregnable" island fortress by land and from the rear.

site airfields all over Malaya, without consultation with the Army, which might someday have to defend those airfields. (The Army commander in Malaya at the time and his RAF opposite number were barely on speaking terms.)

So matters stood at the outbreak of war. A huge base (opened in 1938) with no fleet to occupy it; no landward defenses because there were not enough troops, and a rash of airfields, often poorly sited for defense and, in any case, without planes—such was the reality behind the rhetoric about the "impregnable fortress." Yet there was a point to the public relations claims. Singapore symbolized the determination of Britain to defend its position in Asia. Great powers do not usually *admit* they are in decline. To confess that the Singapore strategy was a shambles would be such an admission. Australia and New Zealand were expected to help in a European war but were unlikely to do so if Britain admitted strategic bankruptcy in the Pacific. So, lacking a coherent strategy, the British fell back on bluff, a bluff in which the public relations drumroll about Singapore's "strength" was a major component. Unfortunately, everyone except Singapore's likely assailant was taken in.

That the Japanese would challenge the British was likely after the outbreak of war in Europe (the same worst-possible-case scenario that was ignored when the Singapore base was planned). That likelihood became a virtual certainty after Hitler's colossal victory in May-June 1940 left two of the European imperial powers in Asia—France and the Netherlands—prostrate before him, while Britain, with the largest stake in Asia by far, fought for its life against long odds. In these desperate circumstances Winston Churchill's government had to concentrate on essentials, and *the* essential was Britain's own survival. Nonetheless, the Far East could not simply be written off. Australia and New Zealand, both sending troops to the Middle East, along with Malaya, exporting rubber and tin to earn dollars desperately needed in those pre-Lend Lease days—all had to be reassured. The reasssurance took the form of a massive paper exercise in the summer of 1940. This "Far East appreciation" revealed how naked to its enemies the British presence there in fact was. But a recognition of impotence was not a policy. The planners therefore did their best to pretend one existed (or could at least be conjured into life). Thus, the RAF responsibility for the defense of Malaya and Singapore was formally confirmed by the British Chiefs of Staff. A magic number—336 modern, first-line aircraft—was proclaimed to be the necessary force to carry out that responsibility. While the RAF built up to that number, an enlarged Army garrison would hold Malaya. To pull everything together a new command, Far East Command, would be set up in Singapore.

Even on paper this scheme had weaknesses, the most glaring being the assumption that the Japanese would dutifully wait until the British were secure. In fact, the plan had virtually no content. Far East Command took the shape of a retired Air Chief Marshal of limited abilities, Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, who had been reactivated and sent out with equally limited powers. The RAF never even tried to supply the aircraft it agreed were necessary. In December 1941, the RAF had about 180 ill-assorted aircraft in Malaya, and none of these could be called "modern" except by what Churchill, in another context, once called "terminological inexactitude." The whole "strategic review" of 1940 that produced the new policy was in fact a piece of bluff, propped up by wishful thinking—and by the all-too-common, and beguilingly attractive, Western

notion of the innate superiority of the white warrior, even with obsolete equipment, over everyone else.

Nothing the British could have done was likely to have prevented the Japanese from trying to take advantage of an opportunity that, as one of their policymakers put it, would come only once in a thousand years. Even before Brooke-Popham had fully settled in at Singapore, however, the Japanese had become aware of the gaping void behind the confident British exterior. This was the result of perhaps the strangest chapter in a story full of them, an episode that proves truth is far stranger than fiction—the *Automedon* affair.

When Brooke-Popham was briefed in London prior to his departure, he was not given a copy of the Chiefs of Staff appreciation that was the basis of his mission. (It is hard to say which was odder—the failure to give Brooke-Popham a copy, or his failure to demand one). After he left, however, someone decided he ought to have his own copy, after all. And so, one was sent after him—but not by air, or even by warship. It went in a locked pouch entrusted to the captain of the merchantman *Automedon*. On November 11, 1940, she was intercepted in the Indian Ocean by the German raider *Atlantis*. *Automedon* was sailing "independently," unescorted, common enough in these waters. *Atlantis'* opening shots wrecked the merchantman's bridge, killing the captain. When members of a German boarding party broke open *Automedon's* strongroom, they made one of the war's great intelligence hauls: 60 mailbags, including *all* the "top secret" mail for Singapore—new ciphers for both the Royal Navy and merchant fleet, six million newly-printed Straits dollars, and the Far East Appreciation. Captain Bernhard Rogge sent this windfall off in one of *Atlantis'* earlier prizes, a Norwegian tanker, which reached Kobe on December 4. The next day the German naval attaché in Tokyo, Admiral Wenneker, realized just what fate had given him. A summary went to Berlin—by land line across Siberia, a method of transmission immune to Britain's codebreakers at Bletchley Park. Hitler ordered the summary shown to the Japanese naval attaché, who on December 12—the same day Wenneker gave the vice chief of the Japanese naval staff copies of the *Automedon* documents—radioed his own summary to Tokyo. Ironically *that* message was intercepted by American signals intelligence. The Japanese naval attaché cipher, however, was one the Americans could not then break, and the message was not read until . . . August 19, 1945.

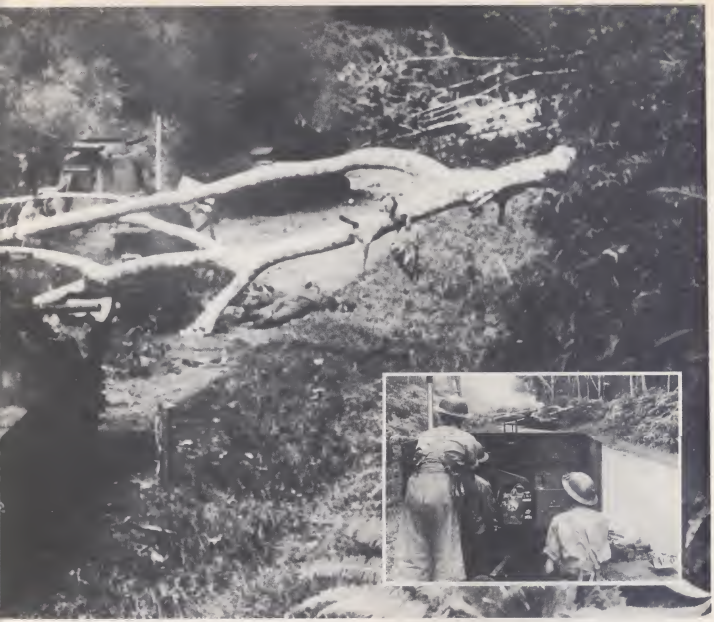
The Japanese had known the British had little with which to oppose them. But this was the sort of hard intelligence about which planners dream, the sort that the ULTRA code breakthrough gave the Anglo-American alliance later in the war. Small wonder that after Singapore's fall, Captain Rogge received a Samurai sword from the hands of the Emperor himself.

The Japanese knew then, as they began to plan their southern drive, that the British could do little to defend themselves in the skies over Malaya or on the seas around it. But what of the much-enlarged garrison, promised to Brooke-Popham to defend all those airfields until the day the RAF actually had enough aircraft to make them assets, instead of liabilities? Here the Japanese had an unwitting ally in Winston Churchill. The Prime Minister saw, with ruthless clarity, that Britain could not afford to divert anything from the struggle for survival in Europe. He set his face against a good RAF striking force or an effective garrison in Malaya, because both would have meant too great a diversion of scarce men, equipment and command talent. (Perhaps this is why Churchill never informed Brooke-Popham when it became reasonably certain that *Automedon's* mail had fallen into German hands. Churchill had never taken the Far East Appreciation very seriously anyway).

This Japanese advance on Singapore was halted by a felled tree trunk and accurate Australian fire—but only for the moment. INSET: The Australian gun team that stopped the Japanese armored thrust.

Of course the garrison in Malaya was increased—but with recently raised, incompletely equipped and inadequately trained formations. As the numbers, but not the quality, of the troops swelled, a new commander arrived, early in 1941. Acting Lt. Gen. A. E. Percival had been in Malaya once before, as a staff officer. After gallant service in World War I, Percival had spent most of the next two decades in staff assignments. He was a very capable staff officer, but he had little command presence and no command experience above the battalion level. He got along poorly with Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath, his principal field commander (and his senior in the Army list) and had relatively little control over Maj. Gen. Gordon Bennett, who commanded the weak Australian division in Malaya (and who, like all Commonwealth commanders, thus held a quasi-independent position). As if all this were not enough, it was not at all clear to anyone exactly how Malaya could be defended.

The Japanese were in Indochina, a jumping-off point for an assault on Malaya. They would have powerful air and naval support and could strike at a time and place of their choosing. How should Percival plan to receive them? One option was MATADOR, a preemptive assault seizing the



most likely Japanese landing point, the Singora area of the Kra Isthmus—in Thai territory, but the best starting point for a drive down Malaya's west coast. The problem was Thai neutrality and London's desire not to violate it *before* the Japanese did. Why? Because to do so might forfeit American support. Whatever else Churchill may have failed to do about Malaya, he did not fail to see how fatal it would be for Britain to go to war with Japan alone. The predictable result was that, although Percival was poised to launch MATADOR, dithering in London and Singapore meant that clearance was not given until it was too late to forestall the Japanese.

Planning for the problematical MATADOR, however, was not Percival's only problem. There were those RAF airfields so liberally scattered over Malaya, particularly near the east coast beaches so vulnerable to the Japanese. A large part of Percival's force had therefore to be committed to their protection.

When the Japanese struck on December 8, 1941—the day after Pearl Harbor—Percival was in the worst of all possible positions. A large part of his forces (and nearly all the RAF's obsolescent aircraft) were poised for an offensive operation (MATADOR) that had just been cancelled. The rest were scattered piecemeal over Malaya. There were no prepared defenses (Percival thought them bad for morale) and no plan for a fighting retreat. All this was presided over by a weak command structure all too often filled with incompatible personalities of mediocre ability.

Catastrophe was not long in coming. First, the Japanese virtually wiped out the meager RAF striking force, positioned for MATADOR on forward airfields that lacked the radar cover available in Singapore and southern Malaya. Then they finished off the last installment of the policy of bluff that had been, of necessity, London's only policy for dealing with Japan. The new battleship *Prince of Wales* and the elderly battlecruiser *Repulse* had been sent east by Churchill in October to exercise a "vague menace." This exercise in deterrence had no effect on the Japanese, who already and irrevocably were committed to war. The ships themselves lasted for 48 hours. Caught without air cover of their own December 10, they were sunk by Japanese aircraft in about an hour. Given the great symbolic significance of the Royal Navy, their loss was a tremendous psychological blow to Malaya's defenders.

The RAF was crippled; the token fleet sunk. Could the Army hold Malaya? Percival had a force that outnumbered the attacking Japanese Twenty-Fifth Army from beginning to end of the campaign. Percival, however, never fought

TOP: Japanese troops storm into Johore Bahru. Trains were immobilized by the retreating British. MIDDLE: A Japanese tank enters Singapore. The defenses of Singapore failed to anticipate a landward attack. BOTTOM: March of conquest: Japanese troops parade victoriously through Raffles Square in newly fallen Singapore, 1942.

with his troops concentrated. One division, continually reinforced as it was repeatedly decimated, bore the brunt of the Japanese thrust down the west coast. Moreover, as the British themselves had proved against the hapless Italians in Africa's Western Desert, numbers are not as good an index of an army's quality as leadership, training, equipment and doctrine. Here the Japanese margins were quite considerable.

Most of the troops in Malaya (and nearly all those trying to stem the Japanese drive down the peninsula) came from the Indian Army, whose expansion had been so rapid that quality had, inevitably, suffered. Not only was the pre-war cadre spread very thin, but there had been little time for training. Much of the training that was accomplished, moreover, was for the wrong sort of war. There were few antitank guns and there had been no training in meeting armored attack. There was equipment designed with the mobile warfare of the desert in mind. All this played into the hands of the Japanese.

Lieutenant General Yomoyuki Yamashita's troops were aggressively trained and led, well-equipped for their task, and they enjoyed air superiority. While their tanks did not look very impressive by 1941 European standards, they were more than enough for raw Indian troops who had never seen a tank before and who had had no training to prepare them psychologically. Since the whole campaign was a fight for the west coast trunk road, Japanese tactics were simplicity itself. Tank-infantry teams came at the British frontally, while others probed for the flanks and swung into the British rear. Once a Japanese roadblock was in position, the roadbound British, encumbered with a train of vehicles designed for a different sort of war, had to turn and fight their way out. Such withdrawals—with raw, tired, shaken troops—were often indistinguishable from routs. By the time the British commanders had established a new position and absorbed replacement formations, the Japanese were ready to do it again. It is in fact remarkable that the much-battered 11th Indian Division held together at all during the long retreat. That it did was a tribute to the professional traditions of the small, and dwindling, core of pre-war regulars. But while they *could* somehow keep their units functioning, they could not stop the Japanese. Nor could the Australians when Percival finally, a month into the campaign, committed them to action in southern Malaya. Nor could the British troops of the 18th Division, rushed from their troopships (after months at sea) directly into action at the end of January 1942.

By early February, about 35,000 Japanese troops had pushed approximately 80,000 British, Indian and Australian soldiers off the Malayan mainland and were poised on the north shore of the Strait of Johore within sight of the Japanese goal. The British had withdrawn into Singapore with a fine flourish of imperial bravura: the last rearguard unit was the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who marched across the causeway to the island city in fine parade-ground style, led by their surviving piper. Then the 70-foot-wide causeway was blown. True to form in this campaign, the breach was incomplete.

The Japanese had already won. The great naval base was useless; Singapore, its population vastly swollen by refugees and its mainland reservoirs in Japanese hands, could be bombed with virtual impunity. Percival, it is true, still had more than 100,000 troops, nearly three times Yamashita's force. But many of them were from service units, and all were discouraged and disorganized by two months of retreat and defeat. Percival himself had lost nearly all his moral authority over his subordinate commanders and behaved like a man in a daze. Since the beginning of the Japanese drive down the peninsula, his chief engineer had

The world turned upside down as victor and vanquished confronted each other at the dramatic surrender of Singapore by Great Britain to the Empire of Japan at 7 p.m., Feb. 15, 1942, the first such surrender of British arms since Yorktown nearly two centuries before. The Japanese commander seated at left is Lt. Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, while his defeated opposite number, Lt. Gen. Arthur E. Percival, coughs with hand to mouth at right. Three years later, their roles would be reversed, with Percival, released from Japanese captivity, present at Japan's formal surrender aboard the USS Missouri *in Tokyo Bay. Yamashita would hang as a war criminal after a trial that is still debated in legal circles to this day.*

urged him to fortify the north shore of Singapore island. Percival had consistently refused to do so. Now, of course, it was too late.

The black clouds of smoke from the burning oil storage tanks at the abandoned naval base were symbolic of the miasma of gloom that had settled over Singapore's defenders by early February. The Japanese, ludicrously underrated before December, were by then almost as badly overrated. Tales of their ferocity (all too well-grounded, in fact), widespread before the war, in this charged atmosphere now produced panic, and not only among civilians. In this setting, the final Japanese attack, launched on a logistic shoestring, succeeded very rapidly. Landing on the northwest side of the island on February 9, the Japanese quickly drove the defenders back to a perimeter covering the city of Singapore, taking in the process the remaining reservoir and pumping station. Within the perimeter, morale was now collapsing. Armed deserters were seizing ships set aside for the evacuation of key specialists (like the radar units). Percival asked London for permission to destroy reserve ammunition. Do so by firing it at the enemy, was Churchill's savage rejoinder. At last, in an abandoned Ford factory at Bukit Timah, late on Sunday, February 15, 1942, Percival surrendered Singapore and all his men—to a two-division Japanese force that had nearly exhausted its ammunition.

Many years later, a distinguished member of Churchill's wartime staff, asked about the fall of Singapore, sadly shook his head. If we had had our best general out there it would not have mattered, he said. He was thinking not of Field Marshall Sir Bernard Montgomery but of General William Slim. Singapore's situation was hopeless from the beginning of the campaign, he added. It was, in fact, hopeless long before that. The whole strategic concept made sense only if Britain could afford the fleet necessary to make Singapore a base for offensive operations rather than a hostage to fortune. That fleet was never available. When this fact became impossible to ignore any longer, the British had only increasingly hollow expedients—airplanes to replace warships, soldiers to hold airfields for planes that would eventually come to defend a naval base that someday might actually house a fleet. Over all this was thrown a haze compounded of optimism (Japan would not attack), racial arrogance (the Japanese weren't very good anyway), and bluff (Singapore was impregnable). When the whole house of cards tumbled down, the blame fell on those on the spot. Percival was a remarkably inept commander, but he and his troops were put in an impossible situation.

There is little in this story that should make an American reader complacent. The Americans were as wrong about the Japanese as the British. The difference was that the United States had the resources to redeem initial and equally embarrassing defeats at Pearl Harbor and Clark Field. By themselves, the British did not; thus the fall of Singapore became the beginning of the end for the British empire in Asia.

And so, as it turns out, it does not matter which way those guns were pointed. □

Raymond Callahan, who teaches history at the University of Delaware, not only tracked down the full story of Singapore, but he wrote a book about it: The Worst Disaster: The Fall of Singapore *(University of Delaware Press, 1977). As other readings, he suggests* Singapore 1941-1942 *by Louis Allen and* On the Psychology of Military Incompetence *by Norman Dixon.*

Battle Tide Reversed

Vastly outnumbered at Midway, the American fleet had surprise on its side. The Japanese had everything else—ships, planes and combat experience. Early in the day, even fate seemed to favor their side.

By Dennis Beck

At daybreak on June 2, 1942, fog and mist covered that portion of the central Pacific. With visibility still down to zero at midday, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo ordered a brief radio message sent out at low power to change course to 125 degrees. All 26 ships of his First Carrier Striking Fleet turned southeast for their final dash to Midway—and expected victory.

Ahead lay a tiny atoll amounting to only three square miles of dry land. Defended by shore guns, some of which dated to the turn of the century, and by a contingent of 120 mostly obsolete bombers and fighters, the American outpost 1,100 miles west of Hawaii was manned by 3,632 soldiers, sailors and marines. As throughout the day the Japanese fleet bore steadily down on them, they were still feverishly preparing their defenses against invasion.

But still another cast of characters in the unfolding drama was waiting offstage. Unknown to the Japanese or to most of the Americans on Midway, an outnumbered and ill-equipped collection of American ships had gathered about 300 miles northeast of the island. Task Force 16 under the command of Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance consisted of the carriers *Hornet* and *Enterprise* and a support group of six cruisers and nine destroyers. Joining this group at four o'clock that afternoon was Task Force 17, commanded by Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher. Escorted by two cruisers and six destroyers in TF 17 was the carrier *Yorktown*, still badly damaged from the recent Battle of the Coral Sea. The rendezvous point, about 325 miles northwest of Midway, had been given a code name during the planning for the coming battle by Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

Japan's first great victory—considered a miracle in retrospect—occurred in June 1942 when a force of Midway-based American Douglass Dauntless dive bombers, Mogami limped away, but Mikuma was sunk. Oil painting by Ed Galen.

Midway was a turning point for the United States in the Pacific War against Japan and her naval forces, but there were many more battles to come. Here, in the painting by U.S. Navy Lieutenant Dwight C. Shepler, Japanese dive bombers penetrate the antiaircraft screen protecting an unnamed U.S. cruiser and narrowly miss the warship with their bombs.

Nimitz had christened the ocean intersection "Point Luck." And clearly the Americans would need luck, plenty of it. In the six months after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese Navy had roamed the Pacific at will, piling up conquest after conquest. The Japanese had, in fact, outrun their own more limited war plans. Early that year the Japanese High Command had faced the problem of choosing which area to conquer next.

One idea was to push farther into the Indian Ocean and eventually link up with their German allies in North Africa or the Middle East. A planned invasion of Australia had been blunted by the Coral Sea engagement but was still possible. A third idea, taken up by Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet, was to seize Midway, located two-thirds of the distance from Japan to Hawaii and at that time the most western American outpost in the central Pacific. Stung at last minute by the Doolittle bombing raid against Tokyo on April 18 from a U.S. carrier (*Hornet*) to the east, the Japanese picked Midway as their next target.

The Japanese strategy was two-fold. First, the island would be softened up by carrier-based air power; it next would be invaded by a force of soldiers and sailors. Only then, according to Japanese expectation, would the remnants of the American fleet steam out of Pearl Harbor—to be annihilated by the more powerful Japanese fleet. The hope was to draw the American fleet into battle.

Yamamoto had endorsed a complex plan drafted by Captain Kameto Kuroshima. Kuroshima had also planned the Pearl Harbor attack and was both brilliant and eccentric (he was rumored to sleep in his shoes and to burn incense while pondering in the dark).

Kuroshima's plan, labelled Operation MI, called for an intricate naval ballet involving no less than 16 different groups of nearly 200 ships. At its heart was Admiral Nagumo's First Carrier Striking Fleet with its four carriers, the *Agaki*, *Kaga*, *Soryu* and *Hiryu*, a force that would pound Midway by air from the northwest. The Invasion Force, meanwhile, would approach from the west, supported by Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondo's Second Fleet. A diversionary force would attack the Aleutians far to the north the day before Nagumo launched his attack, a move leaving some Japanese support ships between Midway and the Aleutians. Steaming behind all these usual forces, themselves a formidable array of sea power, would come the Main Body, personally commanded by Admiral Yamamoto aboard the super battleship *Yamato*.

On May 29, its personnel full of confidence, the Main Body sailed out of Hashirajima harbor in Japan. That same day, in Hawaii, Admiral Spruance aboard the *Enterprise* left Pearl Harbor for the same future battle area. Along with a select few others, Spruance knew a secret.

In the basement of the old Administration Building on the island Spruance had just departed worked a group of Navy cryptanalysts under the charge of Commander Joseph Rochefort, chief of the Combat Intelligence Office. Earlier that spring Rochefort's team had succeeded in reading enough of the Japanese Navy's operational code JN-25 to predict with near-certainty that Yamamoto's target was Midway. It was possession of this intelligence, tempered with his awareness that the whole thing might be a trap, that had caused Admiral Nimitz to send his few ships to "Point Luck," there to lay an ambush—and, it was hoped, to stem the relentless Japanese tide.

Both Nimitz and Spruance knew the odds heavily favored the Japanese, despite any potential intelligence advantage. The Japanese had a total of eight carriers; the Americans three. To the Japanese total of 23 cruisers the Americans had eight. There were 11 battleships in the Japanese order of battle—none in the American.

At "Point Luck" on June 3, the three American carriers spent what almost seemed like a normal day. Far to the west the previous night the battle had already been joined when a handful of Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boats based on Midway had found and then struck with little damage at the Japanese Invasion Force. Early confusion had led some Americans to think that this was the main striking force. Relying on his intelligence team, however, Commander-in-Chief Nimitz radioed an urgent fleet-code message to Fletcher on board the *Yorktown*: "That is not repeat not the enemy striking force—stop—That is the landing force. The striking force will hit from the northwest at daylight tomorrow."

At 7:50 p.m., Fletcher changed course to the southwest in order to bring his ships about 200 miles north of Midway at dawn. Outside it was a calm, moonlit night. But inside the carriers crews hurried to complete preparations for the coming mid-ocean battle.

On board the *Hornet*, the skipper of Torpedo 8 held a last briefing for his squadron. A dynamic and forceful leader, Lt. Cmdr. John Waldron, had drilled his men mercilessly and had fought for extra equipment. At the briefing he passed out a final mimeographed sheet in which he had written: "My greatest hope is that we encounter a favorable tactical situation, but if we don't, and the worst comes to worst, I want each of us to do his utmost to destroy our enemies. If there is only one plane left to make a final run in, I want that man to go in and get a hit. May God be with us all."

As one of his pilots, Ensign George Gay, turned in later, he found it difficult to sleep. Gay had never carried a torpedo in a plane, let alone flown one off a carrier. Many of his squadron mates were equally inexperienced.

On board the Japanese carriers the mood was different. On the *Kaga*, Commander Takahisa Amagai checked his

veteran pilots shortly after they had turned in. They were, he discovered, all fast asleep.

By 4:00 a.m. the Japanese fliers were again awake. On board The *Hiryu*, Lt. Cmdr. Susumu Kawaguchi briefed his men and then sent them off to their planes. It was still cloudy, but the eastern horizon glowed a steady orange, in promise of good weather for the day ahead.

For the Americans the day which dawned was equally beautiful. The temperature was just about right, near 70 degrees, with a soft breeze from the southeast. Fletcher launched ten scout planes northward to check that the Japanese hadn't discovered his task force. The Japanese, too, were sending search planes out. But the scout plane assigned to the ocean sector containing the American fleet was catapulted from the cruiser *Tone* at 5:00 a.m. after a 30-minute delay.

An American search plane from Midway spotted two groups of incoming Japanese fighters and bombers at 5:45. About this time, another PBY—piloted by Lieutenant Howard P. Ady—was flying farther north through rain squalls. Through a break in the clouds Ady looked down, saw Nagumo's fleet below and realized he was "watching a curtain rise on the biggest show of our lives."

By now the air raid alarm on Midway was wailing. At 6:30, despite heroic efforts by the American fighters to stop them, the Japanese bombers attacked Midway in force. Fifteen minutes later the Japanese broke off the attack and flew back to the northwest. They had lost eight aircraft. The American losses had been heavy—26 planes and considerable damage to ground installations. Some American aircraft which had flown clear of the island before the attack now returned.

At 7:00 began the first of a series of uncoordinated and costly attacks on the Japanese carriers by those land-based planes. Heading straight for the position given by Ady, six Gruman TBF Avenger torpedo planes spotted two Japanese carriers and descended to low altitude to make their runs. All except one of the TBFs were shot down by the defending A6M Zeros.

Close behind the TBFs came a flight of four Army Martin B-26A Marauders carrying torpedos, a mission the twin-engine medium bomber never had been designed for. Lieutenant James P. Muri, one of the pilots, observed the slaughter of the TBFs and reached down for a can he kept at his feet. From the can Muri pulled out a Chesterfield cigarette and put it in his mouth.

At low level the B-26s headed for the carriers in the center of the Japanese formation. Hedge-hopping over a line of destroyers and veering through a curtain of anti-aircraft fire, Muri and the others wove left and then right while racing in at 200 feet with attacking Zeros around and behind them. A voice in one of the other planes yelled, "Boy, if mother could see me now!"

Muri shouted to his co-pilot to release the torpedo, but with the improvised switch it was difficult to tell when the torpedo was away. Now, almost on top of a carrier, Muri banked hard and flew straight down the middle of the flight deck. In a moment the Zeros were on them again. With his crewmen wounded, Muri thought about ditching. But finally the Zeros broke off. Muri reached up for the cigarette he had put in his mouth. He discovered that he had failed to light it. Not only that, in the excitement he had bitten it in two and swallowed half.

Two of the four B-26s survived. No Japanese ship had been hit. Nagumo, realizing that American airpower on Midway had not been destroyed, faced a decision.

Half of his aircraft were armed with torpedos, a precaution in case the American fleet thought to be back at Pearl arrived earlier than expected. If this group were to carry

TOP: The sinking of the U.S. carrier Yorktown *during the Battle of Midway June 1942. In this shot, the American carrier is under fire from Japanese aircraft—and is herself on fire. MIDDLE: The listing American flattop begins to sink . . . BOTTOM: Glumly, the crew prepares to leave the doomed vessel before the order "Abandon ship!" is given.*

Seen here at sea, the Japanese carrier Soryu *was one of the four carriers the Japanese lost at Midway. The* Soryu *was hit by dive-bombers from the U.S. carrier* Yorktown, *which itself fell victim to the day's action in the Pacific. The overall numbers, though, favored the American side: four enemy carriers sunk to one American carrier lost.*

out a second attack on Midway, its torpedos must be removed and replaced by bombs, a procedure taking about an hour. In addition, Nagumo's dive bombers should switch from armor-piercing to instant-contact missiles. Nagumo, thinking he had the sea to himself, gave the order to do so at 7:15.

The work was progressing when at 7:28 the *Tone*'s delayed scout plane reported sighting unknown surface vessels to the east. The report contained no mention of enemy carriers, but Nagumo ordered at 7:45 that the switch from torpedos to bombs be halted. He was waiting for more details from his scout plane when at 7:50 the *Soryu*'s air cover reported that another air wave from Midway was coming in from the southeast.

These were 16 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers led by Major Lofton Henderson. Of Henderson's pilots, ten had joined the squadron only a week previously. The mostly-green pilots were jumped by *Soryu*'s fighters just as they caught sight of the Japanese fleet. One of the first to fall was Henderson.

Scoring several near misses, the Dauntlesses were pounced by Zeros waiting for them to come out of their dives, and of the 16 bombers, only eight made it back to Midway, all badly shot up. Once again, despite the heroic effort expended, none of Nagumo's ships had been hit.

Following an equally futile bombing run by high-flying B-17s, a group of 12 decrepit Vought SB2U-3 Vindicators, each with a two-man crew, attacked the Japanese warships. Once again the attack was unsuccessful. But the Japanese fighter defense was not as spirited. Having beaten off five separate attacks in the last hour and a half, the Japanese pilots were becoming weary.

At 8:30, just as his own first attack wave was returning from Midway, Nagumo received a sobering report from *Tone*'s scout plane: "The enemy is accompanied by what appears to be a carrier in a position to the rear of the others." Now the Japanese Admiral faced another, even more crucial battle decision.

Available for immediate take-off were only 36 dive bombers from the *Hiryu* and *Soryu*, together with a number of torpedo planes already re-equipped with land bombs on the flight decks of the *Akagi* and *Kagi*. Overhead, the attack planes coming back from Midway circled, waiting to land. Many of the incoming aircraft were desperately short of fuel.

Nagumo could start an immediate attack on the American carrier with what he had ready to launch. Or he could land his attack force, refuel and rearm, and then attack with everything he had.

His ultimate decision was based on three factors. Horizontal bombing against the American ships would not be as productive as torpedoing, the Japanese specialty. Dive-bombing would be only a bit more fruitful. Secondly, Nagumo had no fighter escort to send with his bombers. All of his interceptors were either waiting to land with the Midway attack force or still were mopping up remnants of the American land-based attacks. And last of all, the Midway attackers could not land until the flight decks were

VICTORY'S CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Midway was the Japanese Navy's first clear defeat since Korean Admiral Yi Sun Sin sank 120 Japanese ships by fire and ram in 1592. The effect of Midway was profound — from then on, the Americans and not the Japanese were on the offensive. Hard years lay ahead, but they were years of a war of attrition that the Japanese could not win.

What is puzzling is why the Americans won. It is not inaccurate to say that "luck" was responsible for the three separate groups of dive bombers arriving within five minutes of another over an unprotected Japanese fleet they had trouble finding. But it is hardly a satisfying answer.

The Japanese themselves later blamed the loss at Midway on their own "victory disease." Mainly because they had been so successful, a smug superiority and contempt for the enemy's abilities had infected every aspect of their planning for events at every level.

Ironically, the radio message Admiral Nagumo had sent out on June 2 to effect a vital change of course seems to have been about the only message the Americans did not intercept and decode. Clearly, the Americans won an intelligence victory. But the Japanese had also suffered a reconnaissance defeat. A more careful search of the battle area might have ascertained that the American fleet was not where it was supposed to be, in Pearl Harbor.

Other factors contributed to the defeat. Nagumo's flattops were so

Admiral Nagumo's carrier strike force was stunned by the appearance of American dive bombers off Midway after the Japanese had brushed off torpedo-plane attacks from two American carrier task forces. The dive bombers quickly inflicted fatal wounds to the carriers Soryu, Hiryu, Akagi *and* Kaga. *Painting by Griffith Bailey Coale.*

clear. In a very short period of time several of them would have to ditch in the sea.

Nagumo, with all this in mind, ordered his flight decks cleared, in order to land his Midway attack group. Aircraft that had been waiting on the flight decks were taken below, where the switch was made back to torpedos. In the rush, the crews removing the bombs had no time to return them to the magazines.

Within 30 minutes all but a few fighters of the Midway attack group had landed. Shortly after 9:00 Nagumo received another message from the *Tone* scout plane: "10 enemy torpedo planes are heading toward you."

From the northeast, sluicing through the morning air, in fact were 116 American dive bombers, fighters and torpedo planes from the *Hornet* and the *Enterprise*. Spruance had made the decision to launch a full-out attack at the earliest possible moment—at 7:00 and with the Japanese carriers about 200 miles away. The decision was not an easy one; the combat range of the slow Douglas TBD Devastator torpedo planes was 175 miles, a factor which meant that most, if not all, would not make it back.

The American attack was intended to be a coordinated one with torpedo and dive bombers striking at the same moment while protected by fighter escort. But in the confusion, and due more to American inexperience than anything else, the groups became separated. And when they reached the anticipated point of interception, they found the ocean below devoid of enemy ships. The Japanese strike force had moved.

The dive bombers from the *Hornet,* under the command of Air Group Commander Stanhope Ring, continued on their original course for another 50 miles. With fuel gauges dangerously low, some returned to the *Hornet.* The rest either flew on to Midway or ditched in the sea. All ten of the *Hornet's* fighters suffered the latter fate.

Better luck, and the right command decision, blessed the *Hornet's* dive bombers. Under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Waldron, 15 TBD Devastators swung off in a shallow arc west-northwest—and flew directly to the Japanese fleet. Nagumo, after learning of the enemy ships, had swung north to close with the American fleet. Now, at 9:18 and just as the last planes of the Midway attack touched down, the Japanese lookouts saw the approaching American planes. To Commander Minoru Genda, Nagumo's air officer, they looked like waterfowl flying over a lake far away.

Racing toward the enemy carriers, Waldron's 15 planes were jumped by at least 35 Zeros. One by one, they were riddled by fire and crashed into the sea. Ensign George Gay saw Waldron's bomber burst into flames, its commander standing up in the burning cockpit. Of the remaining three TBDs, only the one piloted by Gay stayed in the air during the next few moments.

Gay, his gunner-radioman dead, was now the only American attacking the Japanese armada. He pulled up over a destroyer and then went back toward *Soryu,* the carrier Torpedo 8 had tried in vain to sink. Reducing his speed to 80 knots and releasing his torpedo manually, Gay flew just over the ship and was met by five Zeros.

close together that the discovery of one meant the discovery of all. The Zero pilots flew until exhausted. True, but the errors were more fundamental.

As the late Gordon Prange pointed out, the twin objectives of the Midway plan were fundamentally incompatible. To invade the small island meant keeping to a firm schedule. An engagement with an enemy fleet required the utmost flexibility. It was while trying to fit in another air attack on the island defenses to help the scheduled invasion that the Japanese were fatally attacked by the American fleet.

Also, of the two objectives the Japanese stressed the wrong one. Had they concentrated on destroying the American fleet they later could have taken the island with ease.

One of the Japanese officers at Midway, Lt. Cmdr. Masatake Okumiya, later observed: "It has been said from old times that a battle is succession of mistakes and that the party which blunders less emerges victorious." Most certainly, the Americans made fewer mistakes. Admiral Spruance was being modest when he remarked, "We were shot with luck." But luck there was.

It was, as General George C. Marshall later said, "the closest squeak and the greatest victory." Against overwhelming odds and with meager resources, often at terrible self-sacrifice, a handful of determined Americans had reversed the course of the war in the Pacific. The margin was so thin that almost any man there could say with justification that he helped to make the difference.

A Japanese heavy cruiser, wrecked and burning, lies dead in the water after attack by U.S. aircraft on June 6. The photograph was taken by a USS Enterprise *photographer.*

One wing snapped off and he splashed in.

The impact slammed the canopy shut and Gay tore at it frantically as the plane started to sink. Finally, the hood released. He climbed out and paused to make sure his gunner was dead. But before Gay could reach him, the plane slipped beneath the waves. Now in the water, Gay grabbed a black seat cushion of rubber and ducked his head beneath it. Floating in the middle of the Japanese fleet, Ensign George Gay had a front-row seat for the most dramatic show on earth that day.

Soryu, the carrier Gay had aimed at, had not "seen" his torpedo but had happened to turn at the right moment. Fate, so far that morning, was dealing all the winning hands to the Japanese.

But as Gay bobbed in the water, now aware that he was wounded, the torpedo planes from the *Enterprise* were attacking. Again, the slow Devastators proved to be easy targets for the Zeros. Of the 14 aircraft which attacked, ten were shot down.

On board the *Akagi*, Genda watched them fall with exhilaration. Once the carrier-based torpedo planes were eliminated, he thought, an all-out attack on the American carriers could be launched with ease. "We are winning!" he said to himself.

With the torpedo planes from the *Hornet* and *Enterprise* wiped out, only one other torpedo group remained—from the battered, hastily refitted *Yorktown*. Lieutenant Commander Lance Massey's torpedo planes had taken off at 8:38, followed by six Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters under the command of Lt. Cmdr. John Thach.

These aircraft were sighted at 10:15. As Thach and his Wildcats tangled with one set of Zeros, the torpedo planes were attacked by about 20 other Zeros. One of the first casualties was Massey. The last glimpse his wingman had of him, Massey was standing on the wing just outside his flaming cockpit, too low to use a parachute.

Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, leader of the *Akagi*'s air group, and his fliers standing on deck cheered as the Zeros shot down one torpedo plane after another. Those few American attack planes remaining in the air launched torpedos at the *Hiryu*, but none of the missiles hit home.

With this last attack repulsed, Nagumo at last gave the order to launch his attack on the American ships. On the flight decks of the Japanese carriers stood dozens of planes ready to avenge the indignity of the eight separate attacks the mighty fleet had endured that morning.

The four carriers turned into the wind.

The time was 10:20 a.m.

And directly overhead, pausing at 14,000 feet for a moment before they fell, seen by Japanese eyes far below like beads falling loose from a string, were fresh dozens of planes which shouldn't have been there. At that instant the lookouts yelled, "Enemy dive bombers!"

With the Zeros still at low altitude after having dealt with the torpedo planes, Wade McClusky and his 37 Dauntless dive bombers had the sky to themselves. Three carriers lay below. McClusky's squadron began its concerted dive on the *Kaga*. As the scream from the dive bombers rose to a banshee wail, Japanese pilots and sailors everywhere dove for cover. The first three bombs missed. The fourth landed squarely among the planes massed for take-off. In an instant the flight deck was a holocaust.

Aboard the *Akagi*, Commander Fuchida was busy watching preparations for the launch, unaware that the *Kaga* had been struck. At 10:22 the first Zero gathered speed down the flight deck.

Only three American dive bombers had reached the sky over the *Akagi*. They were led by Lieutenant Richard Best from the *Enterprise*. Rushing down in a nearly vertical dive, Best saw the Zero taking off through his gunsight. He released his bomb at 2,500 feet.

Best's bomb was a near miss. The second struck near the amidship elevator and dropped into the hanger. Thinking that the third would be even more accurate, Fuchida rolled over on his stomach and crossed his arms over his head for protection. The impact, near the edge of the port flight deck, was not so severe. But the dive bombers had caught the *Akagi* with a flight deck full of armed and fueled aircraft, with still others in the same condition in the hanger decks below. A chain reaction of explosions soon turned *Akagi* into what one observer called "a burning hell."

EYEWITNESS TO HISTORY

From his "front-row seat" atop the Pacific swells in the midst of the Japanese flotilla, American Ensign George Gay watched the American dive-bomber attack that sealed the fate of Japanese Admiral Nagumo's carrier-strike force.

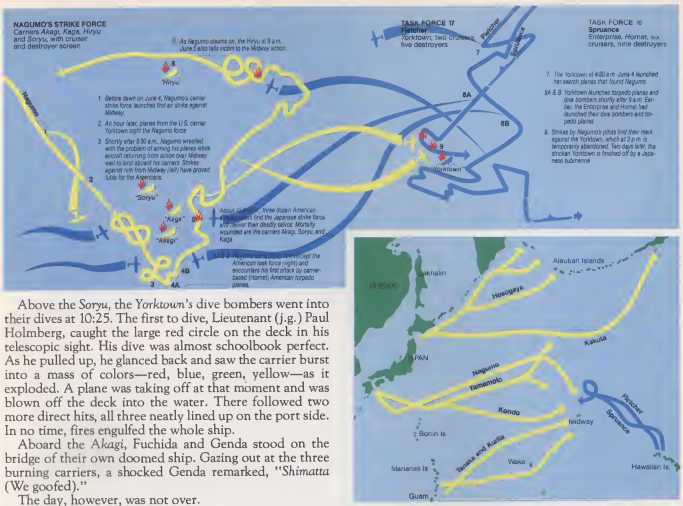
Unheard above the explosions was his wild shouting as the American missiles found their mark. Probably unseen as well, Gay floated in the water closest to the stricken *Soryu*. With every hit, he later said, he found himself cheering like a spectator at a football game.

Unlike football fans, however, Gay couldn't hop in his car and drive home when the game was over. When the American planes left, Gay of course was left alone among his enemies—but they were too stunned, or busy, to know or to care.

At twilight, the *Soryu* went down. Then the *Kaga*. The *Hiryu* during the night was abandoned; *Akagi* was scuttled. With the fall of night, Gay had inflated his life raft, and he now floated to the south of the battle-damaged Japanese ships.

Dozing at times and at other moments watching Japanese searchlights to the north, Gay floated on—and hoped for rescue. Miraculously, it came the next day when he was spotted by an American PBY.

He was flown back to Pearl Harbor, where a doctor asked how he had cleansed and treated his wounds. Gay's laconic reply was that he had soaked them in "salt water for several hours."


NAGUMO'S STRIKE FORCE
Carriers Akagi, Kaga, Hiryu and Soryu, with cruiser and destroyer screen
As Nagumo steams on, the Hiryu at 9 a.m. June 5 also falls victim to the Midway action.
TASK FORCE 17
Fletcher
Yorktown, two cruisers, five destroyers
Spruance
TASK FORCE 16
Spruance
Enterprise, Hornet, six cruisers, nine destroyers
Hiryu
Hornet
1. Before dawn on June 4, Nagumo's carrier strike force launches first air strike against Midway.
2. An hour later, planes from the U.S. carrier Yorktown sight the Nagumo force.
3. Shortly after 8:30 a.m., Nagumo wrestled with the problem of arming his planes while aircraft returning from action over Midway wait to land aboard his carriers. Strikes against him from Midway (left) have proved futile for the Americans.
Soryu
Kaga
Akagi
About 10 minutes later, three dozen American dive bombers find the Japanese strike force and discover their deadly optics. Mortally wounded are the carriers Akagi, Soryu, and Kaga.
Hiryu launches counterstrike against the American task force (right) and encounters his first attack by carrier-based (Hornet) American torpedo planes.
7. The Yorktown at 4:00 a.m. June 4 launched her search planes that found Nagumo.
8A & B. Yorktown launches torpedo planes and dive bombers shortly after 9 a.m. Earlier, the Enterprise and Hornet had launched their dive bombers and torpedo planes.
9. Struck by Nagumo's ships first then mark against the Yorktown, which at 2 p.m. is temporarily abandoned. Two days later, the stricken Yorktown is finished off by a Japanese submarine
8A
8B
9
Yorktown
Aleutian Islands
Sakhalin
(RUSSIA)
Hokkaido
Honshu
Kamchatka
JAPAN
Nagumo
Yamamoto
Kondo
Fletcher
Spruance
Midway
Bonin Is
Marianas Is
Truk
Tarawa and Kwajalein
Wake
Hawaiian Is.
Guam

TOP: As the legends indicate, the naval action at Midway began with the launch of Japanese Admiral *Nagumo's first strike against Midway early on June 4 (far left). As he steamed on, his carrier strike force was spotted by aircraft from the U.S. Carrier* Yorktown. *The action continued as the Japanese flotilla moved down to bottom of the schematic diagram here, then moved upwards. The American task forces are located to right, with the respective air strikes by each side also indicated. As the sinking-ship symbols show, the Japanese lost four carriers at Midway, the Americans one.* ABOVE: *Out from Pearl Harbor (far right) and assembling at "Point Luck" to the north of Midway, the task forces under* American *Admirals Fletcher and Spruance were in position to block the Japanese forces approaching the tiny dot of Midway.*

Above the *Soryu*, the *Yorktown*'s dive bombers went into their dives at 10:25. The first to dive, Lieutenant (j.g.) Paul Holmberg, caught the large red circle on the deck in his telescopic sight. His dive was almost schoolbook perfect. As he pulled up, he glanced back and saw the carrier burst into a mass of colors—red, blue, green, yellow—as it exploded. A plane was taking off at that moment and was blown off the deck into the water. There followed two more direct hits, all three neatly lined up on the port side. In no time, fires engulfed the whole ship.

Aboard the *Akagi*, Fuchida and Genda stood on the bridge of their own doomed ship. Gazing out at the three burning carriers, a shocked Genda remarked, "*Shimatta* (We goofed)."

The day, however, was not over.

At 10:58 a.m., 18 dive bombers and 6 fighters took off from the remaining Japanese carrier, the *Hiryu*, which had so far escaped attack. At 11:40, this attack group sighted its goal—for the first time the Japanese learned that the American naval force consisted of three carriers.

Slashed at by defending Wildcats, the Japanese bombers bore in, choosing the *Yorktown* as their target. Three hits were made. One bomb exploded in the stack and snuffed out the fires in the boilers. *Yorktown*'s speed immediately dropped, and within 20 minutes the ship was at a dead standstill. A second group of Japanese bombers, launched from the *Hiryu* at 1:20 p.m., did even more damage. At 2:55, Captain Elliott Buckmaster reluctantly gave the order to abandon ship.

At five o'clock that afternoon, planes from the *Enterprise* attacked the *Hiryu* in turn. Several *Yorktown* pilots, now based on the other carriers, struck savagely. A tremendous blast rocked the ship, and she soon was burning out of control.

At twilight, the *Soryu* sank, her captain going down with her. Ten minutes later the *Kaga* slipped beneath the waves. The *Hiryu* was abandoned during the night and the *Akagi* scuttled. Also sinking away forever were the Japanese dreams of victory in the Pacific.

Yorktown, it seemed, would survive.

But at 1:31 on the night of June 6, two torpedos from a Japanese submarine struck her as she was under tow. For hours her work crews struggled to save her. When it was clear that she was doomed, Captain Edward Sauer, the destroyer-squadron commander, arranged his destroyers around her in a final ceremony. Flags were at half mast and the Americans stood at attention with hats removed as the great ship began her final plunge.

That dawn, Sauer and the others were aware that a stunning American victory had occurred. The Japanese had lost four carriers (and a heavy cruiser), 275 aircraft and close to 5,000 personnel—among the latter, a crucial blow, were many of their combat-experienced airmen who could never be qualitatively replaced. American losses had been one carrier, a destroyer, 150 aircraft and 307 men. Clearly, it had been a lop-sided score. But it was still more than a score calculated in numbers. What would be realized later, in the months and years to come, was that all the participants, Japanese and American, had been swept along by the tide of history past a turning point, a point called Midway. □

Dennis Beck is a free-lance writer who reviews books for newspapers around the country. For further reading he suggests Miracle at Midway *by Gordon Prange and* Incredible Victory *by Walter Lord.*

Building an air force from scratch while seeing it worn down by combat at same time.

By Robert C. Ehrhart

"It is unfortunate that I had to be in England when everything was subordinated to the operations in Africa, and now have to be in Africa when everything is subordinated to operations in England, but that cannot be helped. Somebody had to hold these jobs. . . ."

At first glance, this simple statement would seem to summarize the wartime career of American General Ira C. Eaker. Chosen in January 1942 to command the fledgling U.S. Eighth Bomber Command, Eaker built that force and its parent Eighth Air Force into a powerful combat machine, only to be reassigned to command the larger but less prestigious Mediterranean Allied Air Forces (MAAF) just as the bombing offensive in Europe hit its stride two years later.

American bombers over an RAF field in England. Painting Return from the Raid Over Rouen *by artist Peter Hurd.*

Yet Eaker was far too modest in implying that he had merely "held" these positions, as amply illustrated in a new biography by his wartime aide—*Air Force Spoken Here: General Ira C. Eaker and the Command of the Air* by James Parton (Adler and Adler, 1986, $24.95). To the contrary, Eaker's contribution to victory over Nazi Germany was indeed substantial.

Today, we tend to view the American strategic bombing campaign in Europe through the prism of 1944 and 1945. Only by remembering that the "Mighty Eighth" grew from six persons and no planes in February 1942 to 185,000 men and 4,000 planes by December 1943 can we appreciate the enormity of what was "the biggest logistical, operational and diplomatic task in the entire Army Air Forces."

One of the values of *Air Force Spoken Here* is the author's willingness to address the complete scope of Eaker's responsibilities. As one of America's early arrivals in England and later as the commander responsible for the shuttle-bombing missions between Italy and Russia, Eaker often found himself in the role of diplomat. His ability to get along with the British did much to get Anglo-American relations off on the right foot. That he was less successful with the Russians reflects upon the Soviet High Command rather than his own assiduous efforts.

Similarly, biographer Parton illustrates very clearly the inexorable intertwining of logistics and operations. Creating an air force from scratch would have been no easy task. Fighting that force at the same time—in effect wearing it down even while trying to build it—was infinitely more difficult. Running as a theme through this entire period is "the continuing shortage of planes, crews, and supplies"—and the constant pressure from above to do more and to get it done immediately.

"Fighting the force" was, after all, the purpose for being there, and Eaker faced these challenges daily. He adamantly resisted British efforts to incorporate his force into their own night operations. (Parton suggests that convincing Churchill to give daytime bombing a fair test was Eaker's "greatest single accomplishment.") Although he apparently believed strategic bombing could win the war, Eaker recognized his primary objective was to gain command of the air by destroying the *Luftwaffe*. He knew, too, that fighting means dying, but he also knew the difference between throwing lives away and expending them for a purpose. Eaker recognized the value of escort fighters, but also understood the war would not wait until they were available. In this sense, Parton's discussion of the second bombing raid against Schweinfurt is most interesting. While the reader is free to disagree with his conclusion and that of the air commanders who "considered the price of Schweinfurt II well worth the effort," the reasons behind their conclusion do merit consideration.

In spite of the difficulties, Eaker did lay the foundation for the air armada that would play an essential role in the defeat of the Third Reich. After his transfer to MAAF (which Parton clearly believes was poorly handled), Eaker received many supportive telegrams. One suspects that for an operational commander like Eaker the most meaningful came from Curtis LeMay: "While you may be absent in body, the spirit of Eaker rides in every bomber to Germany."

Air Force Spoken Here does not confine itself to the period January 1942-January 1944. One is, in fact, impressed by the author's judicious balancing of content. Rightly emphasizing the World War II experiences (including command of MAAF), Parton does not neglect Eaker's place as an aviation pioneer. He discusses his man's in-

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"It is unfortunate that I had to be in England when everything was subordinated to the operations in Africa, and now have to be in Africa when everything is subordinated to operations in England, but that cannot be helped. Somebody had to hold these jobs. . . ."

At first glance, this simple statement would seem to summarize the wartime career of American General Ira C. Eaker. Chosen in January 1942 to command the fledgling U.S. Eighth Bomber Command, Eaker built that force and its parent Eighth Air Force into a powerful combat machine, only to be reassigned to command the larger but less prestigious Mediterranean Allied Air Forces (MAAF) just as the bombing offensive in Europe hit its stride two years later.

American bombers over an RAF field in England. Painting Return from the Raid Over Rouen *by artist Peter Hurd.*

Yet Eaker was far too modest in implying that he had merely "held" these positions, as amply illustrated in a new biography by his wartime aide—*Air Force Spoken Here: General Ira C. Eaker and the Command of the Air* by James Parton (Adler and Adler, 1986, $24.95). To the contrary, Eaker's contribution to victory over Nazi Germany was indeed substantial.

Today, we tend to view the American strategic bombing campaign in Europe through the prism of 1944 and 1945. Only by remembering that the "Mighty Eighth" grew from six persons and no planes in February 1942 to 185,000 men and 4,000 planes by December 1943 can we appreciate the enormity of what was "the biggest logistical, operational and diplomatic task in the entire Army Air Forces."

One of the values of *Air Force Spoken Here* is the author's willingness to address the complete scope of Eaker's responsibilities. As one of America's early arrivals in England and later as the commander responsible for the shuttle-bombing missions between Italy and Russia, Eaker often found himself in the role of diplomat. His ability to get along with the British did much to get Anglo-American relations off on the right foot. That he was less successful with the Russians reflects upon the Soviet High Command rather than his own assiduous efforts.

Similarly, biographer Parton illustrates very clearly the inexorable intertwining of logistics and operations. Creating an air force from scratch would have been no easy task. Fighting that force at the same time—in effect wearing it down even while trying to build it—was infinitely more difficult. Running as a theme through this entire period is "the continuing shortage of planes, crews, and supplies"—and the constant pressure from above to do more and to get it done immediately.

"Fighting the force" was, after all, the purpose for being there, and Eaker faced these challenges daily. He adamantly resisted British efforts to incorjective was to gain command of the air by destroying the *Luftwaffe*. He knew, too, that fighting means dying, but he also knew the difference between throwing lives away and expending them for a purpose. Eaker recognized the value of escort fighters, but also understood the war would not wait until they were available. In this sense, Parton's discussion of the second bombing raid against Schweinfurt is most interesting. While the reader is free to disagree with his conclusion and that of the air commanders who "considered the price of Schweinfurt II well worth the effort," the reasons behind their conclusion do merit consideration.

In spite of the difficulties, Eaker did lay the foundation for the air armada that would play an essential role in the defeat of the Third Reich. After his transfer to MAAF (which Parton clearly believes was poorly handled), Eaker received many supportive telegrams. One suspects that for an operational commander like Eaker the most meaningful came from Curtis LeMay: "While you may be absent in body, the spirit of Eaker rides in every bomber to Germany."

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volvement in such historic events as the "Question Mark" refueling flight, the first transcontinental instruments-only flight, and the Pan-American Good-Will Flight. He touches on all the air-power issues of the Twenties and Thirties, but does so from Eaker's perspective and avoids getting bogged down in details not central to his story.

Throughout the book, Parton provides interesting, and often provocative, assessments of many an American air power leader. In summarizing Eaker's postwar role as a spokesman for American air-power, he applies his material with broad strokes rather than unnecessary detail.

Air Force Spoken Here is not flawless. The reader who lacks a background in air-power history will not derive a complete understanding of the issues. The author's loyalty to his former boss is evident throughout, and his interpretations in fact are sometimes open to question.

Nevertheless, Jim Parton has succeeded in giving us not only a real sense of Ira Eaker as an individual but also a better appreciation of the challenges one operational air commander faced in the past. Students of World War II will want to read this book. Possible participants in future conflicts should.

Ernie's War: The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches. *Edited with a biographical essay by David Nichols. Foreword by Studs Terkel. Random House, 1986, $19.95.*

Time was, in what now seems a distant century, when byline newspaper reporters were the brilliant stars of journalism's firmament. Their galaxy blazed as blinding meteors when wars erupted and some donned the garb of war correspondents—their stories were read by millions.

Most cast only gossamer shadows, with their names only dimly remembered now, if at all, and what they wrote is largely forgotten. But a handful were giants who left indelible imprints on the history of their times.

In World War II, Ernie Pyle was *the* giant of the vanished breed of newsmen whose words captured the horrors of war, its insane brutality, the courage and dignity of the American GIs in the frontlines who did the fighting and dying.

He knew the gnawing fear, the heartbreak and loneliness, the sounds and smells of death and battle because he shared them with the men on the lines in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, the Normandy invasion and, finally, on the flyspeck Pacific island of Ie Shima where, on April 18, 1945, he was killed by a Japanese sniper.

In today's era of electronic journalism when TV anchors are coast-to-coast celebrities and the nation's population gets most of its news from the tube, it's difficult to remember Pyle's fame and the impact of his dispatches in bringing home to millions of Americans the *real truth* of the brutal realities found in the life-or-death combat of World War II.

But David Nichols has done this in a superb selection of Pyle's stories beginning with the bleak days in Great Britain in 1940 before the United States entered the war, and ending with his final reportage from the Pacific a few months before the Japanese surrender.

And Nichols has done much more. His "biographical essay" at the beginning of the book is a brilliant and perceptive insight into Ernie Pyle, the man, and what made him tick. It tells of his problems with booze, a roller-coaster marital life with a wife who three times attempted suicide, his nagging doubts about his abilities as a writer, and the almost overpowering belief that he would be killed in action.

For those who actually fought the battles of World War II, this will rekindle memories of the good times and the bad, of fallen comrades, of the

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dreams for a better tomorrow. It is told as only Ernie Pyle could—and did—tell it.

This book is a must for journalism schools and students who still believe in the power of the written word and the use of crisp, meaningful phrases in putting into focus their deepest and most personal thoughts.

I met Ernie Pyle once. It was on the island called Guam. I was twenty-three. He was thirty-nine. I was a Marine sergeant just returned from the blood-bath of Iwo Jima. He was about to board ship for Okinawa and Ie Shima. We talked for just a short time, and I—as a young newsman—was enthralled at being in his presence.

David Nichols and his masterful book—and the foreword by Studs Terkel—leave no doubt about why I felt this way.

Bill D. Ross

Tug of War, *By Dominick Graham and Shelford Bidwell, St. Martin's Press,* 1986, $24.95.

At 4:30 a.m. on September 3, 1943, the citizens of Reggio Calabria on the tip of Italy's toe were awakened by a thunderous bombardment.

Three brigades of British and Canadian infantry waded ashore, to claim the honor of being the first liberating Allied troops to set foot on the soil of Nazi-dominated Europe. On the same day, a great Allied invasion fleet neared the Bay of Salerno. It carried the U.S. Fifth Army headquarters and Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, the U.S. 6th and the 10th British Corps. So began the campaign to clear the German Army from Italy, and it would not prove to be easy.

The 20-month struggle from September 1943 to May 1945 was a war of heroism and blunders, of brilliant strategy and disastrous miscalculation, that is brilliantly analyzed in this book by two British historians and World War II veterans. Their book is the most detailed study of the Italian campaign yet produced.

The Allied armies marched about 800 miles from Calabria to the Brenner Pass, fighting most of the way and mounting six offensives. It was a bitter and bloody struggle across muddy river valleys and up precipitous mountain slopes. Although the Allies outnumbered and out-equipped him, German General Albert Kesselring's lean divisions — with few big guns, relying on horse transport, and virtually without air support — reacted swiftly to the invasion and made the British, Canadian and U.S. forces pay dearly for every mile.

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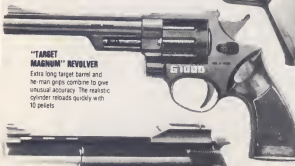

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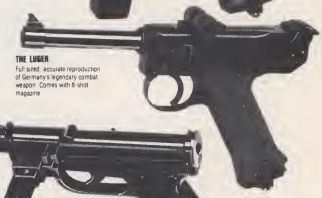

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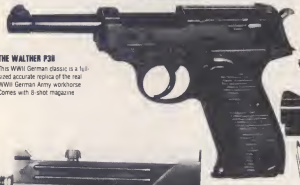

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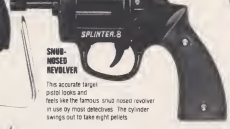

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There were grim battles of attrition reminiscent of the Western Front in World War I which, the authors argue, could have been avoided if General Sir Harold Alexander, the Allied supreme commander, had been given the landing craft diverted for the questionable ANVIL invasion of Southern France. The Italian invasion once was intended only as a clearing-up operation to drive Italy out of the war, but Hitler ordered Kesselring to defend every yard.

"A great war in Italy was inevitable from the moment that the Anglo-American forces were built up in French North Africa," say the authors. "It was then found, as ever, that it is easier to start a war than stop one."

The book provides provacative studies of the Allied generals, some of whom disliked each other more than they did the enemy. Alexander's air of steely resolve concealed a lack of grip, and Clark was jealous and suspicious. The authors examine the battles lost and won; they discuss the fighting merits of the soldiers involved: Germans, British, Americans, Canadians, New Zealanders, Indians, Poles and French. In all, this book is a superb military history.

Graham served in the Royal Artillery in North Africa and Europe, then became a history professor at the University of New Brunswick, Canada. Bidwell saw action in Italy, instructed at the Staff College and the Royal School of Artillery, and worked at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies.

Michael D. Hull

Children of the Blitz, *By Robert Westall, Viking Press,* 1986, $16.95.

Some memories are sharp, yet it all seems so far away now. More than 200 houses in my own Surrey hometown were damaged by German bombs in 1940-41, but my childhood years in World War II seemed more like an adventure than an ordeal.

Sure, we went without many things. We had a quarter-pound of meat and one egg a week; chocolate and candy were severely rationed, and we never saw a banana or an orange for the duration. Spam was a treat, we ate whale meat once, and my mother did things with potatoes that scarcely could be imagined today.

Yet, in the memory of one who was a callow schoolboy in southern England, the war now seems to be a nostalgic haze of images and senses that did not seem to be out of place at the time: Anderson air-raid shelters in the garden, and the drone of German bombers at night; vapor trails in the blue sky, and sleeping under the stairs or the kitchen table; sirens and ration books; drills; policemen in tin hats; names blacked out on road signs and railway stations; bomb craters on nearby farms, where we hunted for bits of German shrapnel; making friends with London evacuees; military convoys rolling southward to the coast; queues outside grocery stores and cinemas; long lines of infantrymen filing wearily back from maneuvers; antiaircraft gun emplacements on golf courses; low-keyed BBC news broadcasts; the excitement of my father coming home on leave.

Robert Westall's gem of a book stirred up my memories. It is a collection of reminiscences by Britons who were children during the war, and it is intensely human, amusing and poignant. For those who were there, this book is a feast of nostalgia. For those too young to know, it will be revealing.

Michael D. Hull

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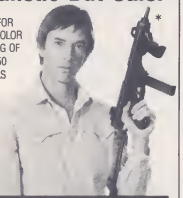

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UnderCover

Continued from page 10

the deliberate spread of murder and mayhem, though. Like any special-mission, behind-the-lines unit, LRDG's intelligence-gathering and reporting was vital to Allied survival in the Middle East.

No less an authority than legendary British Field Marshall Sir Bernard Montgomery said, "Although we kept it a secret at the time, almost 100 percent of the 8th Army's intelligence was coming in as wireless reports from LRDG trucks out there in the desert."

Because its missions were so dangerous and so vital to the war effort, news of LRDG accomplishments, much less even the unit's existence, was not made public until 1942. When the LRDG was finally given its just publicity, both officials and news media praised it highly.

But wartime censorship and security made detailed publicity impossible, and the LRDG's true story did not really emerge until well into the conflict. Somehow, it then got lost among more widely-publicized accounts of commando units and actions. Despite the popular media's inattention, LRDG missions are legion in the official military annals of World War II. It was the LRDG that popped up from nowhere to capture the vital Italian garrison fort at Jalo—*without firing a shot*, so effective was the surprise element put in the attack plan. Jalo then provided the British with an excellent operational facility in North Africa.

LRDG raids at Agedabia wiped out the Italian Air Force's entire squadron of 37 planes based there. Later, in raids combined with the SAS group, LRDG mined the North African coast road continually, destroying nearly 20 percent of the Axis gasoline supply in the area. In one mine-laying mission alone, it destroyed six supply-truck convoys, while suffering only light casualties of its own.

"Plus, we tied up hundreds of their badly needed regular troops who were out looking for us in vain," commented W. G. Kennedy-Shaw, historian and scholar who was the LRDG intelligence officer.

In all, LRDG alone destroyed at least 300 German and Italian aircraft, along with warehouses full of parts, machinery and other supplies, while also accounting for more than 500 assorted Axis soldiers and officers.

No less an expert than Colonel David Stirling, the commando who founded SAS, praised LRDG as having, "an enviable reputation for brilliance, efficiency, and adventure." The LRDG was, he said, "a great model for us to follow."

The SAS and LRDG worked together on many missions, often with the LRDG furnishing the transport and the security to and from battle, while the SAS performed the raiding mission itself.

Their first joint operation came on the night of 14-15 December 1941, when LRDG vehicles carried SAS Captain Paddy Mayne and his men to Tamit Airfield. They destroyed 24 enemy aircraft and shot up the rest of the facilities from their heavily-armed LRDG vehicles.

In their initial missions, the LRDG and SAS were content to sabotage German and Italian aircraft with planted explosives. Within a short time, working with LRDG veterans, Stirling refined the idea of using jeep-like vehicles and light, truck-mounted machine guns as a mobile gun platform. During the 14 months that Stirling commanded SAS, it destroyed 250 Axis aircraft, shot up countless convoys, derailed trains, blew up ammunition and fuel-storage areas, and mined various enemy transportation areas.

During an attack on Sirte, Stirling himself drove the lead LRDG truck in an arrowhead-attack formation charging into the enemy camp. The massed firepower of the vehicle-mounted Vickers K and Lewis machine guns shredded the enemy base and its personnel. "It was like some cinema version of a raid, with our armed trucks blasting away, the men tossing Mills bombs right and left," Stirling recalled. "We trashed that facility."

War correspondent Ben Waters later said, "I guess their most famous mission was when LRDG took Stirling and his SAS people to Benghazi in May of 1942. They put the entire German air facility totally out of action with a combination of sabotage and direct attack. That was the raid where those LRDG trucks circled around and around that German air base popping away with every gun they had, just like Indians circling a wagon train back in the Old West of America."

One of the raiders with the joint SAS/LRDG outfit on that dazzling mission was Randolph Churchill, son of the British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill.

"We had orders not to let Randolph near any action where he might be captured or killed—propaganda, you know," wrote Kennedy-Shaw, who became the unit's unofficial historian. "But he had that extraordinary

Churchillian sense of persuasion and talked his way into one of the machine-gun seats on a truck. He manned that gun during the action."

Colonel Stirling, who go on well with both Churchills, was quoted after the war as saying, with a huge grin: "Winston rather approved of me, as I was a bit gruff with his son and was always throwing Randolph out of airplanes. . . . Of course, Randolph was in on that raid . . . he was one of us, after all."

Both that spirit and mission were typical not just of SAS, but also of LRDG, which was founded early in 1940 by Brigadier R. A. Bagnold, a scholar and pre-war desert explorer. Knowing North Africa's strategic and economic importance, and anticipating the upcoming global conflict, Bagnold had been badgering the British War Office about establishing his proposed special-mission desert unit for quote some time.

"It wasn't my original idea," Bagnold later would write. "You recall that Col. T.E. Lawrence [Lawrence of Arabia] fought that exact type of war very well. I simply wanted to update and refine his masterful World War I tactics."

Bagnold thought he had a chance for his unit in 1939, when Germany began the war in Europe. Yet, it wasn't until the following June, when Italy openly joined in an Axis war front, that the LRDG became an operational reality. "Italy was a direct threat to British interests in the Middle East and Mediterranean. My group finally became a necessity then."

Bagnold added: "We organized as an all-volunteer unit. Our call in 1940 went out for men who did not mind a hard, dangerous life with scanty food, little water, and lots of discomfort. We needed men with stamina, brains, and initiative."

The veteran officer started his new command by bringing in old desert colleagues and experts to train new LRDGers. One of the first was Kennedy-Shaw, the soldier-scholar who became the LRDG intelligence officer.

"Our first volunteers were mostly New Zealanders, but we eventually had men from all the Empire countries, plus a scattering of Americans," Kennedy-Shaw recalled. "We trained each man thoroughly in all the weapons we used, including ours and those of the enemy. Each had to also learn truck mechanics, driving in the desert, plus all the skills of wireless, demolition, some medicine, and lots of navigation."

Were they tough? "Good God, but those men were tough. We didn't have

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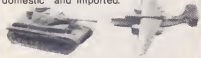

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parade ground pretties . . . ours were hard, rough, fighting men. That's what we wanted, though, and they were all great lads . . . the best.

"We were a very self-sufficient outfit. Out there, you had to be. While normal soldiers always wore boots, we also issued sandals. We issued each man a Nautical Almanac and taught him to use it, along with all the tools of navigation, although we weren't sailors. But we had to navigate on a sea of sand. We issued an Arab-style headdress to all men. We allowed our people great personal freedom in dress and individual weapon selection, too. And we burned up special sand tires at a rate of 200-to-300 times that of a normal combat unit."

Just as training ended in the summer of 1940, the LRDG received bad news—the British military did not have trucks suitable for the desert conditions the LRDG operated in.

"The Brigadier [Bagnold] was undaunted," Kennedy-Shaw reported. "He contacted the Chevrolet distributor in Alexandria, Egypt, who promised us all the trucks he could get. The War Office backed him and bought them for us.

"LRDG got the highest priority for local, factory and our own military modifications, so that we were ready to go within two months. Each truck was a rolling fortress, loaded with radios, supplies and petrol, and festooned with machine guns."

Although the LRDG missions and makeup were hardly ordinary, Bagnold's staff officers tried to provide guidelines for a standard patrol composition, but only for advisory purposes. For instance, at first, two officers and 30 men would transport in 11 or 12 trucks, the possibility of an extra truck depending upon the distance and length of the mission. The trucks carried a minimum of a dozen machine guns, four antitank rifles, a 37mm Borfors gun, individual weapons and as much ammunition, grenades and explosives as could be loaded among the vital food, water, radios, medicine, petrol, oil, spare parts and other vehicle-maintenance equipment. Provisions were figured on a three-week mission basis, according to intelligence officer Kennedy-Shaw.

Field experience soon reduced this "standard" patrol to one officer with 12 to 18 men in six trucks. The smaller, more efficient operation became possible as the men were cross-trained in various duties.

The machine guns were a mixture of Bren guns, Browning and Vickers K machine guns, plus World War I-era Lewis guns, depending upon which was available or favored by a given truck's crew. The Lewis was a favorite for antiaircraft protection, while the Bren was regarded as an excellent assault weapon.

Individual weapons followed British issue, except for the overwhelming desire for Thompson submachine guns or for Italian Beretta or German Schmeisser machine pistols captured by the LRDG troops themselves. Handguns carried by officers included the British Webley and Enfield revolvers, plus a few U.S. M1911A1, .45-caliber pistols, and a smattering of liberated German P38 pistols.

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A British LRDG patrol jeep fitted with both single and twin Vickers "K" guns and a machine gun. In addition, each vehicle carried at least 20 four-gallon cans of gasoline, plus enough food and water to last for a month.

and provisions enough for the usual three-week patrol period, each truck muscled its two-to-three ton payload across the world's roughest terrain. "Sometimes we had to vote to see which was our worst enemy, the Italians and Germans, or the terrain and weather," an LRDG driver, Sergeant B.J. Moore, told reporters after the war.

According to Kennedy-Shaw, LRDG patrols would often run into German and Italian counterparts. "They sent out their trucks and armoured cars, too. But we were tougher, more highly trained and specialized in mayhem, while most of the enemy patrols were simply ordinary troops. But we did have them out after us, which means we were doing our job."

"They'd race at each other in darting sallies, blazing away with machine guns, skidding and swerving, sometimes less than 100 metres apart, throwing up huge plumes of dust," wrote military historian Playfair. "When it was over, the victors, usually our own chaps, would race off, while the losers would be canted over in the sand, under a spiral of black, oily smoke, like some vanquished mechanical gladiator."

Enemy aircraft were another matter, though, and the LRDG usually hid from them, rather than seek out a firefight. Despite the deserved reputation of the Lewis gun as an antiaircraft weapon, the flier still had the strong advantage when attacking a convoy of trucks in open, desert terrain.

As former LRDG machine-gunner Dick Cutler recalled: "We were not afraid of bloody most anything. These are tough lads I served with. But I tell you true, the sound or sight of a Stuka or a Messerschmitt would tighten up your sphincter a good way."

The LRDG driver Sergeant Moore noted: "We didn't mix it up with the Jerry aircraft unless they caught us on the roll in the open, and that wasn't too often. Mostly, we'd hide among rocks or scrub, drag out the camouflage nets and disguise our grand old trucks. Our own fliers told us that from the air we were totally invisible that way. It was safer to just rest under there until the damn Germans got tired of looking for us and flew off."

He recalled that two Stukas caught one of his patrols on its way back to base in the open desert in 1942—in the aftermath only one truck was slightly damaged from bomb fragments, while machine-gun fire wounded one man moderately enough to require him to miss ten days of action while recovering. "The Jerry Stukas? Our six trucks opened up with six Lewis guns, four Vickers K guns and four of our Bren guns. We had all of our lads shooting. The Stukas made only the one pass because we shot the both of them down. How's that!"

The LRDG men were never short of the can-do spirit, even when it came to helping out their copycat SAS upstarts. When then-Major David Stirling needed help to get his SAS commando unit operational in late 1941, he turned to the already-established LRDG for assistance. Its personnel were glad to help.

Captain Don Steele, an LRDG unit commander who was also a friend of Stirling's, told the Major: "Of course we'll help, David. We'll take you wherever you want to go and we'll bring you back—safely." And so they did—a tough alliance, LRDG and SAS, was put together, ultimately a vital contribution to the Allied victory in North Africa. □

Armament

Continued from page 15

and concussion were slowly undermining their strength. "The noise was terrific," wrote one survivor, "like being inside an iron barrel with someone striking it with a large hammer."

To observers on the other islands, the concrete battleship often appeared to be smothered by fire. Near-misses raised whole forests of waterspouts all around the fortress; strikes against the turrets and casemates detonated in quick, bright winks of light; hits on the walls and topside spewed clouds of gray and ocre dust into the humid air. By the end of April, more than 12 feet of the walls had been blasted away in some places, leaving the concrete ravaged and clawed-looking, pocked with raw patches of bent, scorched reinforcing rods.

The fort known as Drum was being pulverized by the bucketful. Yet every day its main turrets still spoke, their thunder rolling across Manila Bay and telling the world that this epic struggle was not yet over, that Corregidor and the Fortified Islands still endured, still fought back.

On the last day of the siege alone, Fort Drum sustained more than one-thousand hits, yet its guns were still firing. Indeed, they had wrought a hideous slaughter on the night of May 5-6, during the Japanese landings on Corregidor. Firing at a range of 20,000 yards, Drum's big guns had dropped more than a hundred shells into a mass of crowded landing barges in the North Channel. And at 10:30 on the morning of May 6, the Marines manning Drum's two surviving .50-caliber guns swatted down a dive bomber that had been trying to hit the 14-inch turrets.

When word of American General Jonathan Wainwright's surrender reached the fort, the gunners loaded their pieces with sandbags, unbolted the recoil cylinders and fired the weapons one last time from remote control. The remaining ammunition was disassembled, the powder cans uncapped, and seacocks were opened to drown the magazines. The 200-man garrison of Fort Drum marched into Japanese captivity on May 7.

The position remained an uninhabited derelict until January 1945, at which time it was re-occupied by 65 sailors from the sunken battleship *Mushashi*—lost in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. By this time, the Japanese Army and Navy were virtually fighting separate campaigns—the Army having withdrawn to the interior of Luzon for a protracted, Okinawa-style defense, and the fire-breathing naval troops having hastily improvised a stubborn but pointless stand in the Bay area. After the heavy fighting on Corregidor came to an end on April 13, a small U.S. naval detachment ferrying an assault company of the 38th Infantry Division aboard LSM-51 (Landing Ship, Medium) approached Fort Drum.

The resulting operation looked medieval, with the LSM functioning just like a siege tower being rolled up to a castle, but it was in fact Roman in its inspiration, for its designer, Lt. Col. Fred C. Dyer, had consciously modeled it after the tactics used in the Punic War engagement at Mylae. Sandbagged machine-gun emplacements had been built on top of the landing craft's conning towers; fire from these, as well as streams of tracers from the boat's own 20mm weapons, kept the Japanese pinned down while the LSM maneuvered close to the wall. A boarding ramp was then dropped on top of the fort, and an assault team charged across and secured the foredeck.

Then a hose was run across to the fort, and a 3,000-gallon mixture of gas and oil was force-pumped down a ventilator shaft. Into another duct, engineers lowered a 600-pound charge of tetryl. The entire operation took only moments, and the startled Japanese could only fire a few desultory rifle shots at the landing craft as it pulled away to watch the fireworks. Three Americans were wounded, none of them seriously.

The demolition charge went off with a disappointingly mild "whump." A couple of minutes later, however, the murderous gas-and-oil mixture detonated with a stupefying blast—a mushroom cloud rolled hundreds of feet into the air, joined by flying blocks of concrete and slabs of armor plate. Fort Drum burned and exploded for days. When the fires had finally burned themselves out, the incinerated remains of its garrison were found where they had fallen; none of them had survived.

Despite its Maginot Line style, Fort Drum was a successful, even brilliant, design. It withstood one of the most punishing bombardments of all time, yet it continued to perform its intended mission right up to the hour of surrender in 1942. Its contribution to the epic last stand of Corregidor was vital. It was, surely, the most singular American installation to see combat during World War II, and it deserves to be remembered with honor—as do the brave men who manned its defiant guns to the bitter end. □

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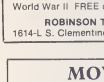

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Personality

Continued from page 8

fatal bout with cancer in 1937, he was among the first to urge FDR to run for a third term as President. Appointed Secretary of Commerce in 1938, Hopkins managed Roosevelt's nomination at the 1940 Democratic National Convention.

Despite his reputation as a feisty and outspoken advocate of social reform, Hopkins was no puritanical do-gooder. He enjoyed life to the fullest. Even when weakened by debilitating illness, he continued to frequent nightclubs, racetracks and theatres, while sloughing off Roosevelt's admonitions to give up cigarettes and cocktails. Although still nominally Secretary of Commerce in May 1940, he began the first of several extended periods of residence in the White House itself. Still a very sick man, Hopkins increasingly devoted his life to the sole purpose of carrying out Roosevelt's will.

He seemed to have an uncanny knack for understanding or sensing what was on the President's mind. Newspaper columnist Marquis Childs commented: "Should the President on a dull day suggest casually to his friend and confidant, Harry L. Hopkins, that the national welfare would be served if Mr. Hopkins were to jump off the Washington Monument, the appointed hour would find Mr. Hopkins poised for the plunge."

For Hopkins, an education in military matters began in the late 1930s, then to progress rapidly once war broke out in Europe. During a discussion of amphibious warfare, Roosevelt demonstrated to him the futility of an American continental defense (a military corollary of isolationism and, at that time, still official policy) by sketching a rough map of the east coast of the United States and pinpointing all the fixed coastal-defense installations, to show that they protected less than one percent of America's vulnerable coastline. Therefore, the President concluded, it was better to extend the line of defense to the enemy's coastline and descend upon his vulnerable points by amphibious assault. Hopkins became an early advocate of both air power and amphibious warfare.

His dawning comprehension of total war was accelerated as the Nazi *Blitzkrieg* rolled over Western Europe in spring 1940. Hopkins became a convinced interventionist at a time when congressional and national sentiment was still strongly isolationist. He asked a reporter in late May 1940: "Suppose Germany wins the war in the next two months . . .? What will they do in South America. . .? Or suppose this war lasts two or three years. What effect is that going to have on the economy of this country?" He began to acquire experience in war production while working with Maj. Gen. James H. Burns of the Army Ordnance Department—and a host of industrialists who were entering government service to help direct America's rearmament.

As the web of agencies, relationships and decisions involved in prosecuting a world war grew more intricate, complex and entangled, Hopkins became a key figure to see if a quick decision were needed from the White House. An incisive and penetrating mind, he became invaluable to the President as a front-man expediter and emissary—to describe his activities in detail would require a recital of the entire history of American diplomacy and strategy during the war. He saw to the production and allocation of enormous quantities of materiel around the globe, often on the basis of scrawled notes such as the one on the corner of a memo about shipment of aircraft to Russia: "OK. But say to them from me: Hurry, Hurry, Hurry!—FDR." He accompanied Roosevelt to virtually every Allied conference and, as Roosevelt's "personal foreign office," undertook numerous additional missions in his behalf. Often ill and exhausted, dosed with half-a-dozen prescriptions at once and accompanied by a doctor, he always was willing to drag himself aboard an airplane for another long, dangerous transcontinental flight to some nocturnal meeting in the Kremlin or at Checquers, the official country house of the British Prime Minister.

While on a cruise in the Caribbean with Hopkins and others in December 1940, Roosevelt received an alarming cable from Churchill saying that Britain was nearing bankruptcy in dollar balances. Because of the "cash and carry" provisions of the U.S. Neutrality Act, this meant that Britain might go down in defeat—the British could no longer purchase American supplies and equipment. Roosevelt's response, described as lending a garden hose to a neighbor whose house was afire, became the Lend-Lease program.

In January 1941, FDR decided to send Hopkins to England to size up Churchill, whom Roosevelt had met only once, 30 years before Hopkins was to make an accurate assessment of Britain's situation, and develop a clear idea of what the British needed. After

weeks of meetings with Churchill, members of his War Cabinet, and military and civilian leaders; after inspections of various military installations, and after experiencing several German bombing raids, Hopkins had a clear and detailed picture of British capabilities, strategic plans and essential requirements for aid.

He had also established a relationship of trust with Winston Churchill. The visit laid the foundation for the close working relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt that, although often strained, was never severed during the war. Upon his return, Hopkins was given the task of running the Lend-Lease Administration, a job that made him virtually *de facto* deputy President because of its power over the production and allocation of strategic materiel.

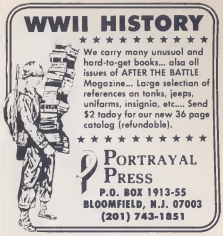
When Hitler turned against Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the entire strategic landscape suddenly changed. Churchill and Roosevelt immediately agreed to extend help to Russia. Hopkins was again sent to London for talks with the British. Once there, he concluded that it was impossible to determine the allocation of aid to the new eastern ally without first-hand knowledge—he requested permission to proceed to Moscow. He flew into Murmansk from Scotland, freezing in a British PBY patrol plane that flew at low altitude across vast stretches of sub-Arctic, German-held territory. In Moscow, Hopkins became the first Allied envoy to break through the wall of secrecy surrounding the situation on the eastern front. In a series of midnight meetings, Josef Stalin told him that Russia would survive the German onslaught and continue to fight. He foresaw a long war. But to win, a share of American industrial production would be vital. The Soviet dictator wanted tanks, trucks, antiaircraft guns and aluminum for manufacture of aircraft. The request for aluminum convinced Hopkins that Stalin's assertions were basically correct. You did not ask for raw materials unless you believed you would have time to shape them into weapons.

The Moscow trip also laid the groundwork for the Atlantic Conference. Hopkins returned aboard the British battleship *Prince of Wales*, together with Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff. They met with Roosevelt, aboard the USS *Augusta*, off Argentia, Newfoundland. The President had brought General Marshall and Henry "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces, at Hopkins' instigation. The major difference that would plague the Anglo-American alliance, whether to pursue a Mediterranean- or Atlantic-oriented strategy, had already emerged, and Hopkins would remain intimately involved in that long debate over when, where and how to open a second front in Europe.

Mindful of the horrendous casualties they had suffered in World War I, British leaders hoped to avoid large-scale clashes between massive land forces by pursuing a peripheral strategy focused on the Mediterranean and Middle East. At Argentia, Churchill explained his strategic concept: to close a ring around the periphery of Europe and gradually step up the pressure on Germany by bombing, amphibious raids, support for underground movements and a gradual carving off of Germany's weaker allies, such as Italy. Mobile armored forces would then land to administer the *coup-de-grace* to a Nazi empire on the verge of collapse—weakened further by internal dissension and revolts of subject peoples. The unspoken assumption was that the Russians would stay in the war and absorb the bulk of Germany's land forces.

American military planners were uncomfortable with those British views. They were not anxious to use U.S. forces to support the implied imperial policy. Mounting major campaigns in peripheral theaters was a dispersion of effort, a "stopping of ratholes," in the words of Secretary of the Army Stimson. Even before Pearl Harbor, they had concluded that the best course of action was to concentrate on defeating Germany. They planned to build up powerful forces in the British Isles aimed at an eventual Channel crossing and a drive toward the heart of Germany. The "Victory Program" of September 1941 concluded that large-scale land operations would be needed to defeat Germany. But it took some time and experience before American planners could come to a conference as well prepared as their British counterparts, maintain unanimity among themselves and, most important, keep their President from wavering from his previously-briefed position. Hopkins thus found himself caught between the professional military advisors and FDR.

At the Arcadia Conference (December 1941-January 1942) in Washington, Churchill lobbied again for operations in the Mediterranean and sold Roosevelt on an invasion of North Africa, code-named SUPER-GYMNAST. SUPER-GYMNAST called for a landing of American troops in North Africa at French invitation and as a counter-move to possible German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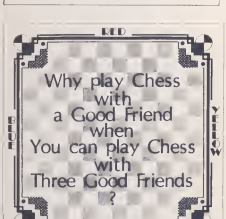

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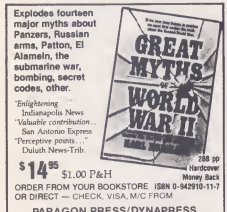
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designs upon the Iberian Peninsula, all to help keep the Mediterranean open. American military planners, led by General Marshall, feared the prospect of depending on French politics, as well as the effect on the tightly programmed logistical build-up in the British Isles. They mounted a counter-attack against Churchill's ideas, with the support of Secretary of the Army Stimson and Harry Hopkins. At a luncheon at the White House on March 15, 1942, those two, plus Marshall, Navy Secretary Frank Knox and Fleet Admiral Ernest King, argued strongly for a return to an Atlantic orientation. The Allies had to concentrate men and supplies in England for a direct assault on Europe, they contended. Roosevelt agreed to send Hopkins and Marshall to London to bring the British into line with the cross-Channel strategy. Hopkins delayed his impending marriage, his third, to the glamorous Louise Macy, former Paris editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, to carry out this mission.

In London, Marshall and Hopkins expounded the American strategy: pour all available resources into Operation BOLERO, the build-up of men and material in Great Britain, to prepare for Operation SLEDGEHAMMER, designed as either an emergency landing in France in the event of imminent Russian collapse, or as a toe-hold in fall 1942, to be followed up and reinforced by ROUND-UP, a full-scale drive against Germany in the year 1943.

The British were not convinced. They thought successful operations against the continent in 1942 were impossible and had serious doubts about 1943. Basically they feared the heavy casualties. Eventually, however, they agreed to adopt the plan, based upon caveats about conditions on the eastern front and the availability of air cover and landing craft. Hopkins returned home satisfied that the decisions taken were irreversible and final.

The British, however, had merely pretended to go along for fear of Marshall's veiled threats to shift the main weight of U.S. efforts to the Pacific. Within two months, Churchill, recoiling from a series of military disasters in the Middle East, was vigorously calling for a revival of GYMNAST.

In June, Churchill sent the suave and charming Admiral Louis Mountbatten to Washington to make the case against cross-Channel operations in 1942. Roosevelt wavered and Churchill immediately crossed the Atlantic to clinch the case. He was with Roosevelt at Hyde Park when the news of the fall of the British fortress of Tobruk came through, a perfect "opportunity" to argue for a revival of GYMNAST to the naturally sympathetic President.

Roosevelt confided his thoughts to Hopkins. *Something* had to be done in 1942. Congressional elections were coming in November. If there were no action by the end of the year, the American people would demand that a full-scale effort against Japan take precedence, and the Europe-first decision would go by the boards. British arguments that a 1942 invasion of France was doomed seemed convincing. The President ordered Hopkins and Marshall to London once more. His instructions were simple: come back with an agreement that would place U.S. troops in action against the Germans somewhere during 1942.

In London, Marshall fought obstinately for the continuation of SLEDGEHAMMER planning. He pointed out that a shift to major operations in the Mediterranean and North Africa in 1942 not only would shelve other plans for that year, but likely would make operations against the continent impossible in 1943 as well, due to the impact on logistics and shipping. His arguments had no effect; the British refused to budge.

Finally, Roosevelt cabled to Hopkins that if SLEDGEHAMMER were ruled out for 1942, operations in the Mediterranean should be the next option. He ordered Hopkins and Marshall to work for a firm date for GYMNAST. The British quickly agreed to the details of such an operation. An exhausted Hopkins, pleased at last to have some accord, cabled Roosevelt: "Africa. Thank God."

The die had been cast. In early November 1942, American troops splashed ashore 1,000 miles from the English Channel, into a hail of Vichy-French fire. The invasion of France was postponed until 1944, with incalculable results, and the political ramifications of the invasion of North Africa (TORCH) brought a storm of criticism down upon American leaders. The pulling and tugging over the second front continued until the Cairo/Tehran conferences in November-December 1943, as Sicily, then Italy beckoned Allied assault, and the Americans were drawn step by step into the Mediterranean Theater. Despite tentative agreements at Trident (Washington, May 1943) and Quebec (August 1943), to accord priority to a cross-Channel operation for 1944, the British came to Cairo still looking eastward. By this time the Americans were prepared. At Tehran, where the Russians joined the talks, the British

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Harry Hopkins (left) greets British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (wearing his famous wartime jumpsuit) at the White House during the latter's visit to Washington late in December, 1941, just after both the United States and Great Britain had been attacked without warning by Japan in the Pacific. In the center are Churchill's daughter Diana, her pet dog and his naval aide, Commander C.R. Thompson.

found themselves in the minority. Stalin officially announced his intention to enter the war against Japan at the earliest possible date after the conclusion of the war in Europe. Brushing aside British proposals for further Mediterranean adventures, he demanded that the Anglo-Americans set a date and name a commander for the cross-Channel invasion.

After Tehran, OVERLORD, as it came to be called, was set in concrete, but the British did not give up. They shifted their energies toward derailing ANVIL, the secondary invasion of southern France designed to support OVERLORD. Until days before the operation was slated to go in August 1944, Churchill bombarded Hopkins, Roosevelt and Eisenhower with cables pleading for its cancellation in favor of the Balkans or Italy, to no avail. American preponderance by now had come to rule the alliance.

Hopkins was criticized before the war as a spendthrift for his roles in New Deal welfare programs; he was sniped at for his performance as Lend-Lease Administrator. But nothing exposed him to more unwarranted attacks than the events surrounding selection of a supreme commander for Europe. General Marshall wanted to lead troops in the field, following in the footsteps of his mentor, World War I General of the Armies John J. Pershing. But Marshall's rigorous sense of integrity prevented him from speaking on his own behalf. (Ironically, the aging Pershing wrote to Roosevelt that Marshall's role in Washington was far too important to remove him to some mere field command.) Eisenhower, too, wanted the job, and was chalking up vital field experience. To bring him back to Washington, perhaps as Chief of Staff, would be awkward, and he probably would not have Marshall's magic touch with Congress.

Roosevelt sensed, too, that whoever became supreme commander would garner so much fame that his road to the White House would be paved in the future. This was another reason he favored Marshall. But he could not make up his mind. For weeks, Marshall hung on tenterhooks, and a blizzard of charges and counter-charges filled the air in Washington, many of them asserting that Hopkins was conspiring against Marshall. This was doubly ironic, since he and Marshall were close and trusting friends.

It was at Cairo, after the Tehran meetings, that Roosevelt realized he could not do without Marshall in Washington. Hopkins was delegated to sound out the General, who merely agreed to go along with any decision the President made. In a private meeting next day, Roosevelt could not prod Marshall to be more forthright about his own desires. He then told Marshall, "I could not sleep at ease if you were out of Washington."

Hopkins' health deteriorated dramatically as the war went on, as did that of his master. Although the marriage to Louise Macy brought him some happiness, he suffered a bitter blow in February 1944, when his 18-year-old son Steven, a Marine, was killed on Kwajalien Atoll. He remained a member of the President's inner circle until the end, but his role as an advisor declined somewhat in importance after the strategic patterns were set at Tehran. He had made it possible for the President to dominate diplomacy and strategy, but events were beginning to dictate their own consequences, beyond control of even the President.

At the Yalta Conference (February 1945), the focus had shifted to the post-war world. Hopkins lay seriously ill for the first part of the conference, as the map of Europe was redrawn. Tentative agreements were reached on occupation zones in Germany, and Poland was shoved westward 150 miles. But, with the common enemy in retreat on all fronts, cracks were beginning to develop in the grand alliance. There was disagreement (and Soviet insistence) about the composition of the Polish provisional government. The Soviets demanded $20 billion in reparations from Germany. The British balked, mindful of the destructive effects of the post-World War I reparations tangle. Hopkins rose from his sick-bed to coin the verbal formula that cited the $20 billion as a "basis for discussion," thereby preventing the break-up of the conference in deadlock. Unfortunately, as the alliance later fell apart, the Soviets chose to interpret this phrase as an agreement to their demand—they returned to it repeatedly and with increasing vehemence in the Cold War years to come.

When Franklin Roosevelt died in April 1945, Hopkins was terminally ill himself, but he worked gamely to ease the transition of President Harry S. Truman, providing continued impetus for the building of the United Nations and further negotiation with Stalin. His last service was to fly to Moscow to help arrange for the Potsdam Conference. For this efforts, Truman awarded him the Distinguished Service Medal. Returning to New York in July 1945, Hopkins became chairman of the Women's Cloak and Suit Industry. Within six months he was dead of hemachromatosis.

All the leaders of the great powers in World War II were larger-than-life figures. While Hitler and Stalin seemed like throw-backs, barbaric warlords from the dawn of time, even the elected leaders of the great democracies conducted themselves like Renaissance princes. Hopkins was Roosevelt's version of the faithful and selfless courtier, and as such, served both his master and his country well. Seated at the right hand of power and influencing the course of history, supervising the spending of billions of dollars, he died virtually penniless. □

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